

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council
Draft Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held at 7.00 pm
on 15th September 2015
In the Bear Room, Guildhall, Abingdon-on-Thames.

Present

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Cllr Sandy Lovatt | Chairman |
| Cllr Michael Badcock | Vice-Chairman and Chairman of Planning, Highways & Consultations Committee |
| Cllr Alice Badcock | Chairman of Amenities and Recreation Committee |
| Cllr Samantha Bowring | |
| Cllr Dennis Garrett | Chairman of Guildhall Committee |
| Cllr Vicky Jenkins | |
| Cllr Monica Lovatt | Chairman of CH Museum Management Committee |
| Cllr Patrick Lonergan | |
| Cllr David Pope | |
| Cllr Andrew Todd | Chairman of Community Services Committee |

In Attendance

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Mr John Tabor | Manager South and Vale Carers |
| Mr Nigel Warner | Town Clerk |
| Mrs Susan Whipp | Treasurer / RFO (Clerk to the meeting) |

SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)

F30 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from the Mayor, Cllr Helen Pighills.

F31 **Declarations of interest**

None.

F32 **Minutes**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the special meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 6th August 2015.

(Cllr David Pope entered the meeting, it being 7:03pm)

(Cllr Samantha Bowring entered the meeting, it being 7:05pm)

The following changes were agreed:

Page 5: To read "Cllr David Pope declared a non-pecuniary interest in the item at minute F24, creation of occasional market as a member of the Rotary Club of Abingdon, which was one of the stall holders at the proposed market.

He took no part in the discussion or voting on this item and remained in the meeting.”

Page 7: F20 to read: “(Cllr David Pope declared a non-pecuniary interest in this matter as a member of the Rotary Club of Abingdon, which was one of the stall holders at the proposed market. He remained in the meeting but took no part in the discussion or voting on this item and remained in the meeting).”

There were also two misspellings of the word “relation.”

Resolved: that subject to the above corrections, the minutes of the special meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 6th August 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

F33 **Matters Arising**

F22 – Regarding minute F16, the Mayor’s robe will be ready for the Remembrance Day service on 8th November 2015.

F34 **Statements and Questions from the Public**

There were no statements or questions from the Public.

F35 **Matters referred**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk:

(i) **Guildhall Committee meeting of 30th July 2015**

It was noted that at its meeting of 30th July 2015, the Guildhall Committee approved plans for the Guildhall Project to RIBA level A/B (appraisal and design brief). These had been drawn up by the Council’s architects, Lewandowski, who were very familiar with the building, having drawn up the previous plans on which these new plans build.

The Guildhall Development Working Group had now, under its delegated powers, commissioned the Council’s architects to further develop these plans to RIBA stage D (concept and design development). This would enable the Council’s quantity surveyor to then accurately cost the work so that decisions could be made regarding funding, an application for planning permission and then commissioning of the building work.

Alongside this work the Working Group was developing the revised business plan, which would help to inform the design work.

A summary of the current proposals had been circulated with the agenda.

Once the above work had been completed it was anticipated that the matter would then come back to the Council for decision and this may require a special meeting.

(ii) Planning, Highways and Consultations Committee meeting of 1st September 2015

The above Committee had considered the area which would be included within any Neighbourhood Plan for Abingdon-on-Thames. At the meeting the Committee asked that Abingdon Common, which was within the freehold ownership of the Town Council, should be included. A copy of the map showing the proposed Neighbourhood Planning area had been circulated to all Members. The Finance and General Purposes Committee view on the Neighbourhood Planning area was now requested.

The Town Clerk stated that in considering whether the Council should undertake a Neighbourhood Plan, there were a number of considerations including the governance and resourcing of the process. In this regard, three members of the Planning, Highways and Consultations Committee, the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee and the Town Clerk had attended a conference organised by the Vale and South District Councils on 2nd September 2015 and the presentations received from the organisers would be circulated separately. Mr David Potter, Neighbourhood Planning Officer, would attend a special meeting of the Planning, Development and Highways Committee, on a date to be advised. All Members would be invited to attend this meeting.

The Chairman of the Finance and General Purposed Committee circulated a Community / Neighbourhood Planning Flow Diagram which explained the stages of producing a Neighbourhood Plan. A copy of this document is appended to these minutes. Progress was currently at "process initiated by qualifying body" stage and the Council would now need to submit the map to the District Council, declaring the area they wished to be included in the Neighbourhood plan. The Chairman explained that the introduction of a Neighbourhood plan, alongside with the new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) should mean significant developer contributions would be received by the Council in the future, these amounting to 25% of the CIL if a Neighbourhood Plan is in place (15% if it is not, the difference of 10% in these circumstances accruing to the District Council). The Committee discussed the likelihood of receiving this in full and the use of the CIL, and questions were raised concerning the need for additional infrastructure such as a new primary school, which the County Council might need to approach the Town Council for funding for. The Chairman explained the district or county council could ask the Town Council for a contribution in order for such infrastructure to be put in place if they had insufficient funds themselves. Such a request would have to be negotiated.

A councillor asked how long it will take and how much it will cost to set up the Neighbourhood Plan, but this was unknown as yet. The Council would need to set up a Steering Group for the Plan, consult widely and eventually the Plan would require approval by the public in a town-wide referendum.

The Chairman of Planning, Highways and Consultations Committee explained that an officer from the district council would be attending a special briefing/ meeting of the Planning, Highways and Consultations Committee to explain the process in my detail. All councilors would be invited to this briefing/ meeting to learn more.

Concern was expressed that recently promised improvements to Lodge Hill were being linked to a Park and Ride be constructed in that area and it was agreed that this would need to be monitored.

Members discussed the use to which any CIL would be put.

The map boundary was discussed, in particular the inclusion of parts of Radley and Sunningwell. Following concern from a Member regarding how these parishes would be informed of this Council's proposals it was **resolved** that the Town Clerk would write to these parish councils to inform them of any recommendation from this Committee. A suggestion was also made as to whether Shippon/ St Helen Without should be considered as part of the Planning area.

The Committee then voted on the proposed map as circulated with the agenda:

Yes – 8 votes
No – 0 votes
Abstentions – 2 votes

Recommended that: the proposed Neighbourhood Planning area as detailed on the map, and previously circulated to Members, be submitted to the District Council.

(Note: as this map is best viewed as a colour copy, this will again be circulated separately from these minutes).

(Mr. John Tabor, Manager of the South and Vale Carers' Centre, entered the meeting during discussion of this item).

(iii) Community Services Committee meeting of 8th September 2015

The recommendations which had been referred to the Committee by the Community Services Committee were discussed. The recommendations were then moved by the Chairman of the Community Services Committee, Cllr Andrew Todd and seconded by the Vice-Chairman, Cllr Alice Badcock. The recommendations were all approved, either as resolved matters or as recommendations for onward consideration by the Town Council.

(a) Clubs and societies day 2016

It was noted that with the temporary closure of the Guildhall there was no budget to enable facilities to be hired for the above event to take place.

Resolved: that a Clubs and Societies Day should be organised in spring 2016 and that the Community Services Committee vire up to £1000 virement from the Community Grants budget for hire of facilities for this event. *(Note £1,000 was believed to be the maximum amount required, the expectation being that it will be less than that).*

(b) Markets

(i) General Market Strategy

The committee recommended the following statement of strategy to the Town Council:

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council considers that markets are an opportunity to promote the town, raise its profile and demonstrate its vibrancy, as well as offer local businesses a low-cost way to reach consumers. Therefore this council will create and manage markets with the primary objective being the increase of footfall into the town rather than the raising of income. Previous investment in the infrastructure of the Market Place has been worthwhile as it has created a very appropriate and usable space but this council recognises that ongoing small investments in marketing and promotional activity to increase footfall is also an important part of a sound strategy which will provide economic and social benefit to the whole town.

(ii) Monday market

Resolved that a small percentage of the income received from the Monday market should be reinvested in promoting or improving this market. Community Services Committee should recommend a sum as part of the annual budgeting process and the Community Services Officer should consult with the traders committee on how this sum should be spent with signage, banners or print being among the range of possible promotional tools as well as free activities like social media. A sum of approximately 3% of income (£600) was considered to be acceptable to reinvest in the future of this market.

(iii) Community Events that also include stalls

The Committee noted that the officer report highlighted a situation that occurs extremely infrequently but causes unnecessary difficulties and wasted officer time. Occasionally community groups wished to have a few semi-commercial stalls as part of an event and not all of these were permitted under the existing legislation unless a market is declared by the council. Community groups were not aware of the time that is required to agree a market through the meeting cycle of the

council. In order to allow for officers to manage this situation efficiently, the committee

Recommended that an annual delegation be made to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Community Services Committee to create a maximum of one market in any calendar month so that this delegation can be used in such situations, this delegation to be exercised where there was not sufficient notice to bring the matter to Committee.

Note that the Community Services Officer was requested to bring forward proposals which would allow fuller delegation to officers in relation to markets, subject to agreed criteria being put in place.

F36 **Community Fund application**

(Agenda item 8 Community Fund application was taken ahead of agenda item 7).

The committee received and considered an application from Vale and South Carers for a grant of £5,000.

Mr John Tabor, Manager of South and Vale Carers was present at the meeting and was invited to speak. Mr Tabor circulated some additional papers to support the application and answered questions from members of the committee.

It was proposed by Cllr Patrick Lonergan and seconded by Cllr David Pope that the Council award a higher grant of £7,500.

The committee voted on this proposal:

| | |
|---------------|---------|
| Yes – | 8 votes |
| No – | 0 votes |
| Abstentions – | 2 votes |

Resolved that: a grant of £7,500 be awarded to South and Vale Carers.

(Mr John Tabor, Manager of the South and Vale Carers, left the meeting following discussion of this item).

F37 **Financial Report**

The Committee received and considered the report of Treasurer / RFO.

With regard to the Internal Audit report attached at Appendix D of the report, a Member asked whether there were any plans to improve on the level of the general fund held. The Town Clerk explained that although the general fund is currently less than the recommended 3 months of expenditure, councillors in the past have agreed that due to the high level of earmarked reserves this was acceptable on the basis that these reserves have been created from

revenue and would likely be deployed ahead of any drawing against general revenue reserves. The committee agreed that this was still acceptable.

A question was asked about the loan to a local football club which had not yet been repaid. It was agreed that the Town Clerk would investigate.

Resolved

That the report of the Treasurer / RFO dated 9th September 2015 be adopted, including approval of the schedule of accounts from 1st May to 31st July 2015, the management accounts for the year to date and the report of the Internal Auditor, all of which had been circulated with the agenda.

F38 Business Improvement District (BID)

The Committee received and considered the Business Plan which the BID team were launching on 17th September 2015 at The Crown and Thistle Public House at 5:30pm and which had been circulated to all Members with the agenda. All members had also been invited to attend the BID launch.

A member asked how much the BID would cost the Council if it goes ahead. The Town Clerk explained it would be in the region of £2,000 a year.

The results of the vote were to be announced on 30th October 2015.

Recommended that:

The Council vote in favour of the BID and that a delegation is granted to the Town Clerk to cast this vote on behalf of the Council.

F39 Dates of meetings 2015/16

Members noted the dates of the meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for 2015/16:

- 15th December 2015;
- 12th January 2016 (Budget);
- 8th March 2016

F40 Publicity

It was **agreed** that the Town Clerk instruct the Community Services Team to email clubs and societies and add a front page news article to the website with details of grants available.

SECTION II

F41 Exclusion of the public, including the press

Resolved that the Chairman move:

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.

F42 Confidential Appendix

The confidential appendix to the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 6th August 2015 were considered.

Resolved: that the confidential appendix of the meeting of 6th August 2015 be approved as a correct record.

F43 Matters Arising

F29 – the Town Clerk gave a verbal update on staffing matters in relation to the Guildhall.

F44 Property matters

The Committee received and considered the Confidential Report of the Town Clerk.

Resolved: that an additional sum of £5,000 be delegated to the Guildhall Development Working Group to draw up plans to RIBA stage D, this being necessary to provide for acoustic, structural engineering and service engineering advice and for a builder to be employed to allow enabling/opening up works for the purpose of the above investigations.

It was noted that the architects would attend the Council meeting on 30th September 2015 to give an update on progress and to present the plans to date.

F45 Residents' Parking Scheme

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk.

Resolved:

That authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to conclude an agency agreement with Oxfordshire County Council for the regulation and management of the Abingdon-on-Thames Residents' Parking Schemes, in accordance with the heads of terms outlined in the Town Clerk's confidential report.

F46 **Staffing matters**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Treasurer / RFO.

Resolved:

That the confidential report of the Treasurer/RFO be approved and authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, as recorded in the confidential appendix to these minutes.

The meeting rose at 8:48 pm.

DRAFT