

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 21st July 2020 at 7:00pm

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 Samantha Bowring	Chair
Cllr Jim Halliday	Vice-Chair and Chair of Amenities & Recreation Committee
Cllr Gabby Barody	
Cllr Charlie Birks	Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames (ex-officio)
Cllr Margaret Crick	Chair of Guildhall Committee
Cllr Neil Fawcett	Chair of Community Services Committee
Cllr Andy Foulsham	
Cllr Pat Lonergan	Chair of County Hall Museum Management Committee
Cllr Lorraine Oates	Chair of Planning, Highways and Consultations Committee
Cllr Ulrike Rowbottom	

In Attendance

Cllr Alex Greenaway	
Mr Steve Rich	Head of Services / Assistant Town Clerk
Mrs Susan Whipp	Treasurer / Responsible Financial Officer (Clerk to the meeting)

SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)

F37 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Eric de la Harpe.

F38 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

F39 **Minutes**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, held on 16th June 2020.

It was **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 16th June 2020 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

F40 **Matters arising**

Regarding the suggestion of a Cycle route naming project (minute F28, Community Infrastructure Levy Policy), Cllr Pat Lonergan confirmed he had passed a list of suggested cycle routes to the Town Clerk.

F41 **Statements and Questions from the public**

There were no statements or questions from the public.

F42 **Matters Referred**

Green Scrutiny Committee

The committee received and considered a recommendation from the meeting of the Green Scrutiny Committee held on 7th July 2020: *that officers carry out analysis in order to quantify the emissions caused by the Town Council's activities, using scope 1 and 2 of the "Government conversion factors for company reporting of greenhouse gas emissions"*.

The committee discussed the capacity of staff in the current circumstances, the option of councillors carrying out the task, and the benefits of using an external company to complete the analysis.

It was **resolved** that:

- (i) an external company be appointed to carry out a review of the Town Council's emissions using scope 1 and 2 of the "Government conversion factors for company reporting of greenhouse gas emissions".
- (ii) The sourcing of a company be delegated to Cllrs Gabby Barody and Alex Greenaway.

Summer Events Sub Committee

The committee received and considered a recommendation from the meeting of the Summer Events Sub Committee held on 14th July 2020: *that the official project of the Town Council for HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee (or next Coronation) be the installation of a bandstand in Abingdon.*

Cllr Jim Halliday stated that he supported the project proposal in principle but noted that there could be difficulties finding a suitable location and the costs could be high for such a project.

Cllr Samantha Bowring agreed and added that it would be important to gain the town's support for such a project and fundraise. Cllr Bowring also suggested that there should be careful consideration regarding the title of the project

The committee voted on the proposal and it was unanimously agreed to **RECOMMEND to Full Council** that the official project for the HM Queen's Platinum Jubilee (or the next Coronation) be the installation of a bandstand in Abingdon.

F43 **Financial Report**

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

Regarding the Town Council's resolution in relation to the funding of the Guildhall Buildings Maintenance Programme, the committee requested that the Treasurer / RFO check the details contained within her report. [*Subsequent to the meeting, the Treasurer checked and confirmed to members that her report was correct, the funding resolved was for the five-year period 2020-21 to 202024-25*].

The Treasurer reminded members that it had been resolved at the Council Meeting of 29th January 2020 for £60,000 of the Pooled Property Fund (the responsibility of this committee) be used for this maintenance programme and it was agreed that this be transferred in order for it to appear in the management accounts of the Guildhall Committee.

Regarding the management accounts, it was commented that the expenditure incurred by the Community Services Committee appeared lower than expected. The Treasurer explained this was due to the cancellation of the Fun / Music in the Park event, due to the Covid-19 lockdown, which led to a saving in costs for June 2020.

It was **resolved** that:

- (i) The payment schedules for the period 1st May to 30th June 2020 be approved
- (ii) The management accounts for the period 1st April to 30th June 2020 be approved
- (iii) The report of the Internal Auditor be approved
- (iv) £60,000 of the pooled property budget (499/4864) be transferred to the Guildhall Committee.

F44 **Coronavirus – COVID-19**

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

Members discussed the town centre challenges arising from the lockdown. Cllr Pat Lonergan asked whether it would be possible to part fund an additional PCSO to assist with anti-social behaviour such as littering. Cllr Samantha Bowring replied that it may be possible to contribute financially but she believed the council would not be able to stipulate their priorities.

Members noted the report.

F45 **County Hall flagpole**

The committee received and considered the report of the Assistant Town Clerk.

Prior to considering the proposed costs of the rectification works to the existing flagpole, the committee discussed the history and tradition of the flagpole being on the roof of the County Hall. A proposal to consider alternative locations was put forward and discussed. The committee then voted, and it was agreed (7 votes for, 2 against, 1 abstention) that the flagpole would remain on the County Hall roof with no review of alternative locations.

Members agreed that the work needed to go ahead and requested that the Assistant Town Clerk proceed with the arrangements. However, it was also agreed that there should be an attempt for some redress from the company who carried out the flagpole works previously. Mr Steve Rich, Assistant Town Clerk, confirmed he had already contacted the project management company but had faced difficulties due to staff changes. It was agreed that a letter be sent directly to the flagpole company expressing the council's disappointment with the poor workmanship, but there was no justification for waiting for a response before the rectification works could go ahead. The response to the letter, together with the need for any further action, would be considered later. It was also agreed that the suggested annual inspection contract be taken out.

It was **resolved** that:

- (i) The quote of £2,890 + VAT from the Flagpole Company be approved, and an order placed for the works
- (ii) A letter be sent to the original company, the outcome of which to be followed up later
- (iii) A contract for an Annual Inspection be entered into with the Flagpole Company, at an initial cost of £494 + VAT

F46 **Environmental implications**

No matters not already discussed at other items in the agenda were identified.

F47 **Publicity**

Cllr Jim Halliday suggested that an article be added to the website to explain why there is currently no flag flying on the County Hall. Cllr Pat Lonergan agreed and said this could also be included in the information posters the museum officers had been asked to produce and display on the County Hall doors.

Regarding the proposed bandstand project, it was agreed this could be shared with the public and the next edition of the Town Crier would be a suitable way of doing so.

Cllr Neil Fawcett, Chair of Community Services Committee, requested that all committee chairs email Miss Louise Brown, Administrative Assistant, with a summary of the publicity resolutions from their recent committee meetings in order for these to be considered for the next Town Crier publication.

F48 **Dates of meetings**

The committee noted the dates of the future meetings:

13th October 2020
24th November 2020
8th December 2020 (reserve)
13th January 2021 (reserve)
9th February 2021
30th March 2021
15th June 2021

F49 **Public Spaces Protection Order**

The committee received and considered information on a proposal from the Vale of White Horse District Council in relation to the Abingdon Public Spaces Protection Order. This was due to expire on 31st July 2020. *This was a late agenda item which had been added after the publication of the agenda due to its urgency- the District Council requested a response by 22nd July 2020.*

Cllr Bowring explained that the District Council were proposing to extend the protection order conditions in relation to alcohol and retain the order in place until 30th September 2021.

Cllr Pat Lonergan commented that he believed litter was now a bigger problem and he hoped this could be included in this order. Cllr Neil Fawcett replied that the extension of the order is for the specific conditions listed in the order (alcohol related anti-social behaviour and vehicle related anti-social behaviour). However, it was agreed that any response to the district council should include the town council's concerns about the increase in litter.

The committee voted on the extension of the order and it was agreed (7 votes for, 1 against, 2 abstentions) that a response be sent to the district council in favour of the extension. It was further agreed that the response would request that the extension ceases as soon as the Covid-19 pandemic allows.

F50 **Exclusion of the public, including the press**

It was moved 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.

F51 **Confidential appendix to the minutes**

The committee received and considered the confidential appendix to the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of 16th June 2020.

It was **resolved** that the confidential appendix was a correct record and should be signed by the chair.

F52 **Guildhall matters**

Cllr Neil Fawcett updated the committee on matters relating to the Guildhall and Abbey Cinema. Cllr Margaret Crick (Chair of Guildhall Committee) thanked Cllr Fawcett for his continued work on these matters. *See the Confidential Appendix to the minutes.*

[Cllr Fawcett left the meeting, the time being 8:39pm].

F53 **Neighbourhood Plan**

Cllr Samantha Bowring gave a verbal update on progress with the Neighbourhood Plan. Members noted the report. *See the Confidential Appendix to the minutes.*

The meeting rose at 8:48pm.

Chair.....

Date.....