

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council
Draft Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting
on Tuesday 12th June 2018 at 7:30pm
in the Royse Room, Guildhall, Abingdon-on-Thames.

Cllr Mike Badcock	Chairman
Cllr Dennis Garrett	Vice-Chairman and Chairman of Guildhall Committee
Cllr Alice Badcock	Chairman of Amenities & Recreation Committee
Cllr Samantha Bowring	
Cllr Margaret Crick	Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames (Ex-officio)
Cllr Vicky Jenkins	Chairman of Community Services Committee
Cllr Monica Lovatt	Chairman of CH Museum Management Committee
Cllr Sandy Lovatt	
Cllr Helen Pighills	
Cllr David Pope	Chairman of Planning, Highways & Consultations Committee
Cllr Andrew Todd	

In Attendance

Cllr Robert Hall	
Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk
Mrs Susan Whipp	Treasurer/Responsible Financial Officer (Clerk to the meeting)

6 members of the public

SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)

F5 **Apologies**

There were no apologies.

F6 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

F7 **Minutes and matters arising**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 27th March 2018 and 9th May 2018.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 27th March 2018 and 9th May 2018 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

F8 **Statements and Questions from the public**

There were no statements and questions from the public.

F9 **Personal Sub-Committee**

The committee considered the appointment of a Personnel Sub-Committee of five members.

Resolved: that a Personnel Sub-Committee would be appointed and would consist of the following members –

Cllr Mike Badcock
Cllr Dennis Garrett
Cllr Sandy Lovatt
Cllr Neil Fawcett
Cllr Patrick Lonergan.

(Cllr Samantha Bowring arrived at this point, it being 7:35 pm).

F10 **Matters referred**

The committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to matters referred from the Amenities and Recreation Committee and matters referred from the County Hall Museum Management Committee:

Amenities Committee Meeting 23rd May 2018

- (i) Members considered the funding requirement of the proposed tarmacking of the roadway in the Spring Road Cemetery and the recommendation from the committee that the shortfall of funding be transferred from the Cemetery Improvements and Footpaths earmarked reserves. Cllr Samantha Bowring asked whether the Footpaths earmarked reserve only related to cemetery footpaths or all footpaths within the town under the Town Council's remit. The Town Clerk explained that it was for all footpaths the Town Council are responsible for maintaining.
- (ii) Members considered the proposed replacement of the mechanical digger at the Cemetery. The estimated cost was reported as £18,000 and £13,547 of this would be covered by the appropriate amount within the Repairs and Renewals earmarked reserve relating to the existing digger of £13,547. Members were requested to approve the shortfall (estimated at £4,453).

County Hall Museum Management Committee Meeting 24th May 2018

- (iii) Members considered the request that any shortfall in the grant for the proposed framing of the World War I posters be covered by a transfer from the Museum Acquisitions Reserve. The estimated cost of this project was reported as between £5,000 and £6,000.

Recommended that:

- (i) The use of Cemetery Improvements earmarked reserve and the Footpaths earmarked reserve be approved, in relation to proposed

tarmacking of the roadway in Spring Road Cemetery, subject to the formal tendering process, delegated to the Town Clerk in conjunction with the Chairman of Amenities and Recreation Committee;

- (ii) The use of the Pooled Equipment (499/4844) to cover any shortfall in funding for the purchase of a new mechanical digger be approved, subject to the obtaining of quotes and approval by the Chairman of Amenities and Recreation Committee, with authority being delegated to the Town Clerk;
- (iii) The use of the Museum Acquisitions earmarked reserve to cover any shortfall in the grant awarded to cover the costs of framing the World War I posters be approved.

F11 **Finance Report**

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

Cllr Samantha Bowring asked the RFO whether the format of the payment schedules could be changed so that VAT is shown separately or not included. The RFO explained that the report is generated by the Cash Book module of accounting software and the cashbook does not record VAT separately, instead it records the full value of the payments being made. An alternative report could perhaps be produced by the Purchase ledger module of the accounting software but this would not be in the same format. It was agreed that the RFO would investigate alternative formats and report back at the next meeting.

Cllr Sandy Lovatt suggested that the management accounts show that this committee is heavily overspending. The RFO signposted members to paragraph 2.3 of her report which explained that the “overspend” of £122,232 on the face of the management accounts is due to the Guildhall building works costs of £104,330 not yet being matched to use of the deferred grant from Vale of White Horse District Council to cover these costs. Once this end of year adjustment is included, the actual overspend of this committee was reported as £17,902 which is 2.3% of budget.

Resolved: that the report, and all recommendations contained therein be approved.

F12 **General Report of the Town Clerk**

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

(a) **Community Governance Review**

Members noted the letter which has been received from the Vale of White Horse District Council which sets out the process for the undertaking of a review of the parish boundary between Abingdon-on-Thames, Radley, St Helen Without and Sunningwell parishes.

Members reviewed the proposed boundary changes as shown on the map from Vale of White Horse District Council (page 39 of the agenda reports

pack) and Cllr Sandy Lovatt suggested that the portion of Radley parish to the west of Oxford Road at Lodge Hill and as far North as the bridge over A34 be included within the proposal for Abingdon-on-Thames parish.

Members agree with this proposal and it was **recommended to Full Council** that the proposed boundary changes, together with the amendment suggested by Cllr Lovatt be communicated to Vale of White Horse District Council by the deadline of Friday 6th July 2018.

(b) Democratic support software

Members noted the Town Clerk's report that he is currently investigating the purchase of "Modern.Gov" and he will report back at the next meeting.

F13 **Bus Services**

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

The Town Clerk reminded members that £30,000 had been included within the 2018/19 budget as a contribution towards the cost of a bus service from South Abingdon to the town centre. The Town Clerk explained that he had considered the options for procuring a bus service and had concluded that the most effective option was approaching a commercial bus operator to run the service. Having had discussions with Oxfordshire County Council and the previous operator, Thames Travel, a proposal to run a service based on the route of the former 41 service within has been suggested for consideration by members. A formal proposal should be received by the Town Council from Thames Travel in the coming weeks and the Town Clerk suggested delegation in order to not delay matters once the proposal has been received.

Members considered the proposal of using one quote. Cllr Samantha Bowring queried whether the proposal required more than one quote. The Town Clerk replied that the Council's Standing Orders allow for the Council to accept one quote. Cllr Mike Badcock explained that officers had taken advice from Oxfordshire County Council and were following their recommendation regarding discussions with the previous operator Thames Travel.

Cllr Vicky Jenkins asked for clarification of the proposed route. The Town Clerk explained that the 41 route was a loop, connecting Stratton Way with a number of locations including Fairacres Retail Park, Caldecott Road, Saxton Road and Preston Road.

Cllr Jenkins stated that she would also like to see the bus service to cover the Audlett Drive area and suggested that the route could alternate to cover both areas. The Chairman, Cllr Mike Badcock reminded members that the £30,000 budget had been approved for bus services in the South Abingdon area only and so at this time members were requested to consider that area alone. Cllr Badcock acknowledged that other areas of the town are also in need of improved bus services.

Cllr Mike Badcock proposed (and seconded by Cllr Alice Badcock) that the initial proposal be approved and further decisions be delegated to Cllrs Mike Badcock and Dennis Garrett, together with the Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames Cllr Margaret Crick and the Town Clerk.

Cllr Samantha Bowring stated that she would like the route to be extended to go as far as the Leisure Centre. Cllr Garrett stated that members were approving the service for one year only, and any extensions or changes to the route could be considered at a later date. Cllr Andrew Todd stated that once the service is operational then members can consider if it worth continuing or changing the route, dependent on use.

The Town Clerk reminded members that there was an additional report in the Confidential Section of the agenda which may assist with decision making. The Committee agreed to go into Confidential in order to discuss both reports at the same time (*the time being 8:00pm*).

The Committee then reconvened the public section of the meeting (*the time being 8:05pm*).

Resolved that: the initial proposal be approved and that delegation be made to Cllrs Mike Badcock and Dennis Garrett, together with the Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames Cllr Margaret Crick and the Town Clerk.

F14 **Publicity**

Members considered any areas which require publicity.

- (i) Cllr Alice Badcock suggested the proposed bus service and Cllr Mike Badcock confirmed this would be publicised once a formal proposal is in place.
- (ii) Cllr Mike Badcock stated he would like the Weekend of Remembrance in November to be publicised at an early stage. Cllr Badcock confirmed that he had already contacted the Vale of White Horse District Council and asked for the multi storey carpark to be open on Sunday 11th November 2018. Cllr Monica Lovatt asked if the working group responsible for the Weekend of Remembrance had met yet and asked whether the Armed Forces Charity SSAFA had been invited to be party of the working group. Cllr Badcock replied that there had been one initial meeting of the working group and then SSAFA would be invited to be involved in due course.
- (iii) Cllr David Pope suggested that the reopening of the outdoor swimming pool should be publicised. Cllr Badcock stated that this is a District Council service who would be publicising it themselves.

F15 **Dates of meetings for 2018/19**

The Committee noted the dates of the meetings for 2018/19 as:

- Tuesday 2nd October 2018
- Tuesday 18th December 2018
- Tuesday 15th January 2019
- Tuesday 5th March 2019

Members also noted that it may be necessary to have special meetings of the committee during the year.

F16 **Exclusion of the public, including the press**

The Chairman 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.

F17 **Confidential Appendix**

The committee received and considered the Confidential Appendix to the Minutes of the meeting of 27th March 2018. Cllr Monica Lovatt asked whether confidential reports could be posted out to members. The Town Clerk reminded Cllr Lovatt that not sending confidential papers in the post was a Council resolution and so if members wished to receive the receive these papers in the post again it would need to be referred back to Full Council.

Members agreed for this matter to be referred back to the next Full Council meeting for consideration (action for Council meeting of 27th June 2018).

Resolved: that the confidential appendix to the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 27th March 2018 be approved and signed as a correct record.

F18 **Agency Agreement with Oxfordshire County Council**

Members received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk.

See the Confidential Appendix to the minutes.

Resolved: that the proposals contained within the report be recommended to Full Council. See the Confidential Appendix to the minutes.

F19 **Matters referred**

(a) Guildhall Committee Meeting 17th May 2018

Fees and charges

Members considered the matter referred from the Guildhall Committee regarding the principles of charging in relation to the Guildhall.

Resolved: that charging will be based on the following principles-

- Subsidised rates for community groups;
- Commercial rates for business meetings, conferences etc;
- Wedding rates set at realistic level, aware of the need for an option for local people who have a limited budget.

Equipping the Guildhall

Members considered the funding requirements of the proposed new equipment needed in the Guildhall.

Regarding the purchase of audio-visual equipment, the Town Clerk reminded members of the report from Huw Edmunds Associates which included estimated costs. Cllr Helen Pighills asked whether the council should be considering leasing the equipment instead, as this would reduce the risk of equipment becoming out of date. Cllr Dennis Garrett, Chairman of the Guildhall Committee, agreed this could be investigated and it was agreed to ask Huw Edmunds to obtain some quotes of the cost of leasing. Cllr Andrew Todd asked members to remain mindful of the overall cost of leasing and explained that, in his opinion, such equipment becomes out of date after five years. Cllr Todd suggested that if the cost of leasing over five years is more than purchasing the equipment outright, then leasing would not be the best way forward.

Resolved: that an additional budget of £20,000 required for the purchase of audio-visual equipment could be funded from the Capital Equipment budget (499/4844).

It was further **recommended to Full Council:** that an additional £15,000 be utilised from the Equipment ear marked reserve to cover the remaining cost.

See Confidential Appendix to the minutes.

New Foyer design

The Town Clerk reported that a cost had been obtained in relation to required fit out and equipment in the foyer of the Guildhall (Bridge Street). This would be funded from the existing Guildhall equipment and furniture budget, the implementation of which was delegated to the Guildhall Development Working Group.

The Town Clerk reminded members of some matters which would require resolving before the foyer work could be approved.

See Confidential Appendix to the minutes.

Wi-Fi

The Town Clerk then reported on the quote in relation to updating the Wi-Fi system in the Guildhall.

Cllr Sandy Lovatt asked whether the Council's policy is to depreciate IT equipment. The Town Clerk explained that IT was depreciated in the financial accounts at cost but that this was not provided for in any renewals/replacement fund. Cllr Alice Badcock suggested that a revenue budget item should be added to on-going budgets to cover this expected additional expenditure and requested that the Treasurer / RFO include this in her draft 2019/20 revenue budgets in the Autumn.

Cllr Dennis Garret asked the Town Clerk whether he has considered contacting alternative IT providers. The Town Clerk explained that, in his experience, it is preferable to have one main supplier of all IT services.

Cllr Andrew Todd told the committee that he had reviewed the quotes and (in his professional opinion) thought they seemed reasonable. Cllr Todd suggested that on-going revenue costs could be revisited after the initial contract period.

The Committee noted the report and it was **resolved that** both capital and revenue costs should be covered by the Guildhall Committee's own budgets.

See the Confidential Appendix to the minutes.

Outsourcing of the management and operation of the Guildhall

The Chairman, Cllr Mike Badcock reported that expressions of interest had been received and these would now be subject to a formal tender process. A draft specification and timeline for this process would be brought forward to a special meeting of the Guildhall Committee on Monday 25th June at 7:30pm.

(b) County Hall Museum Management Committee Meeting 24th May 2018

Members considered matters referred from the County Hall Museum Management Committee.

It was **recommended to Full Council:** that the recommendations contained within the report of the Town Clerk be approved.

See the Confidential Appendix to the minutes.

F20 Property and other matters

The committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk regarding the proposed rental of the Abbey Hall to Regal Cinema (Evesham) and property works to the Abbey Hall and ancillary accommodation.

Resolved: that, subject to the amended wording tabled at the meeting, the recommendations contained within the report be approved.

See the Confidential Appendix to the minutes.

Meeting rose at 8:50pm.

.....
Chairman

.....
Date

DRAFT