

**Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council  
Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting  
held on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019 at 7:00pm  
in the Bear Room, Guildhall, Abingdon-on-Thames.**

**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 Eric de la Harpe	
Cllr Neil Fawcett	Chair of Community Services Committee
Cllr Andy Foulsham	
Cllr Jeanette Halliday	Chair of Planning, Highways & Consultations Committee
Cllr Patrick Lonergan	Chair of County Hall Museum Management Committee
Cllr Ulrike Rowbottom	

**In Attendance**

Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk
Mrs Susan Whipp	Treasurer/Responsible Financial Officer (Clerk to the meeting)
Rita Atkinson	Abingdon DAMASCUS Youth Project

**SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)**

F18 **Apologies**

There were no apologies.

F19 **Declarations of interest**

Cllr Jim Halliday declared an interest in relation to lack of fibre connectivity as he is a local resident in the area affected. See minute F24.

F20 **Minutes**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019.

It was **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> June 2019 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

F21 **Statements and Questions from the public**

The meeting was attended by Rita Atkinson, Trustee of The Abingdon DAMASCUS Youth Project who spoke in support of the grant application being considered under agenda item 5.

*[The Town Clerk entered the meeting, the time being 7:09pm].*

F22 **Matter referred**

Community Services Committee Meeting 20<sup>th</sup> August 2019

The committee considered a grant application from The Abingdon DAMASCUS Youth Project. The amount applied for was £5,000. This had previously been considered by the Community Services Committee who had resolved to award a grant of £1,000 from its budget and recommended to Finance and General Purposes Committee that the remaining amount applied for be funded from the Community Fund.

It was proposed by Cllr Fawcett, seconded by Cllr Lonergan and **resolved that** an additional grant of £4,000 be awarded from the Community Fund.

Guildhall Committee Meeting 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019

The committee received and considered a request from the Guildhall Committee for expenditure to be funded from the central Pooled Property Improvements Budget (499/4864). The committee were also requested to consider the use of the civic treasures earmarked reserve to part fund the replacement of the current treasure's cabinet.

It was **resolved that**:

- (i) £3,000 from the Pooled Property Improvements Fund be used towards the Muniment Room fit out.
- (ii) £10,000 (maximum) from the Pooled Property Improvements Fund be used for the provision of bicycle parking, bin stores and emergency car park patching.
- (iii) £17,784 from the Pooled Property Improvements Fund be used for the improvements to the treasures cabinet in the Roysse Room, subject also to the recommendation below.

It was **RECOMMENDED to Full Council** that:

£20,866 be released from the Civic Treasures earmarked reserve (emr 334) to part fund the replacement treasures cabinet.

*[The meeting then adjourned, the time being 7:34pm and reconvened at 7:43pm].*

F23 **Bus Services Working Group**

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. Cllr Jim Halliday commented that there had been two meetings, both of which were

attended by different members of the working group. It was agreed that the timing of future meetings would be considered in order to allow the same members to attend, thus providing better continuity of discussions.

Cllr Neil Fawcett asked whether the working group is looking at potential changes to the service in the future, rather than any immediate changes. Cllr Samantha Bowring confirmed that the current arrangements are based on a rolling contract, with a three-month notice period required for any changes.

Members noted the report.

#### **F24 IT Working Group**

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk confirmed that he has received quotes for the installation of a leased line and agreed to circulate these to members of the working group prior to the next working group meeting (date to be agreed). It was acknowledged that the original task of the working group to consider the procurement of tablets had been superseded by other matters for now. Cllr Bowring asked the working group to research options for tablets as soon as possible, notwithstanding the other IT matters the group is considering.

The committee discussed the Community Fibre Partnership (CFP) as an option to expediate fibre installation in the town centre. This would involve joint working with other groups and organisations in the local area. Cllr Jim Halliday declared a personal interest in this matter as a resident in the area. Cllr Andy Foulsham commented that the CFP should be looked at in order to assist local residents and businesses but he had concerns whether such an arrangement would be sufficient for the business needs of the Guildhall complex. It was agreed that the Council would continue lobbying on behalf of local residents, while also pursuing a solution for the Council. Cllr Bowring asked members to consider how they could best work with the community and bring any ideas to the next meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee.

#### **F25 Financial Report**

Members received and considered the report of the Treasurer / RFO. The Treasurer updated members on the new payment arrangements which have been put in place since the last meeting. Regarding the payment made for the quarterly part-funding of the PCSO, Cllr Jeanette Halliday commented that previously Members received a formal annual report from the PCSOs but this was no longer the case. The Town Clerk agreed to request such a report. It was also noted that a Neighbourhood Policing report was already received in relation to the whole town and it was agreed, subject to Police consent, that this should be posted onto the Town's website. He confirmed that PCSO Ali Blood would be attending the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting.

Regarding the actions raised at the recent Strategy Day, Cllr Neil Fawcett asked why the work to identify the fixed and variable elements of the budget was not

included in this report. The Treasurer responded that she had discussed this with both the Leader of the Council and Town Clerk and it had been agreed that at this stage of strategy setting such a report would be premature. She explained that in the longer term the majority of the Council's costs could be treated as variable / optional as the Council is bound by very few duties. Members agreed that the priority should be to agree the Council's strategy which would then inform the budget. In the meantime, it was agreed that members and staff would consider any efficiency savings which could be identified within the current budget. This would then be reported back to the next meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Cllr Gabby Barody asked how the Council considers investing its funds. The Treasurer replied that at present the funds are within business savings accounts which offer immediate access. It was agreed that the Town Clerk and Treasurer would investigate alternatives and bring a report back to the next meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee.

Members then considered the proposal to allocate overhead central services' staff time to services. Cllr Samantha Bowring explained the reason for this would be to understand the full cost of running each service. The committee considered the pros and cons of introducing such a system and voted (9 for, 2 abstentions) to trial it for six months.

It was **resolved that**:

- (i) The payments listings for 1<sup>st</sup> June 2019 and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019 be approved;
- (ii) The management accounts, for this committee and for the full Council, for the period up to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019 be approved;
- (iii) Members and staff be requested to identify any efficiency savings within the current budget;
- (iv) Officers trial a system of allocating central service's staff time from October 2019, and present an interim report to the next meeting of Finance and General Purposes Committee.

## F26 **Brexit**

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. It was agreed that the suggestions contained within the report were appropriate. There was further discussion regarding staffing matters, water supplies and the town's role should major problems arise. Matters would be reviewed by the Leader and the Town Clerk as events unfolded over the coming months. Cllr Bowring requested that members send any other suggestions to the Town Clerk.

Members noted the report.

It was **resolved**, further to the report, that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to offer support and assistance to staff members from EU nations who were applying for settled status, as was appropriate.

F27 **Council Strategy Day**

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. Cllr Bowring confirmed that a special meeting of the Council was to be arranged, at which the Strategy and priorities of the Council would be approved. Cllr Fawcett asked what the format of this meeting would be. Cllr Bowring replied that there would be a Group meeting prior to this, at which an outline proposal for the Strategy and priorities would be drafted. This would then be considered formally at the Council meeting.

It was **resolved** that the date for the special meeting of the Council was Monday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at 7pm.

F28 **Financial Regulations**

Members received and considered the report of the Treasurer / RFO. The report contained a proposed updated version of the Financial Regulations which took into account changes within the NALC model financial regulations and the specific arrangements of this Council.

It was commented that the draft regulations do not include any reference to environmental matters and it was suggested that this could be included within section 9.4 (procurement of goods and services). Cllr Pat Lonergan suggested that instead of changing every Council document to reflect environmental issues, the Council could adopt an overall policy on green / environment issues which could then overlay all documents.

It was proposed by Cllr Jim Halliday, seconded by Cllr Samantha Bowring and approved that it be **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council:

That the draft updated Financial Regulations be approved.

F29 **Council Core documents**

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. The Committee reviewed the core council documents which had been circulated. Regarding the Council and Committee Terms of Reference, the Town Clerk suggested that the appointment of co-opted members to sub-committees should only require approval by the parent committee and not also approval by full council. This would then be in line with the co-option rules for committees which do not require full council approval. Members concurred this seemed a sensible approach. No other amendments within any of the documents attached to the report were suggested by members.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to Full Council that the Council's core documents be approved for continued use, subject to the amendments listed below:

- (i) Member Code of Conduct
- (ii) Standing Orders

- (iii) Council Terms of Reference – subject to amending:
  - (a) *“Co-option of members to Sub-Committees requires the approval of the parent committee, which will then make a recommendation to the Council for final approval”*  
To:  
*“Co-option of members to Sub-Committees requires the approval of the parent committee”*
  - (b) changes to reflect the establishment of the Green Scrutiny Committee;
- (iv) Council privacy policy
- (v) Code of Practice in relation to public speaking at Council meetings
- (vi) Privacy Policy
- (vii) General privacy notice for residents and members of the public
- (viii) General privacy notice for staff, councillors and role holders
- (ix) Subject access requests policy
- (x) Code of practice for handling complaints
- (xi) Flag policy in relation to the County Hall

### F30 **Community Infrastructure Levy**

Members received and considered the report of the Treasurer / RFO. Cllr Neil Fawcett asked whether the District Council would be paying interest to the Town Council if they retained the funds on behalf of the Town Council. The Town Clerk replied that such an arrangement had not been included in the letter from the District Council and it was agreed this would be investigated prior to the committee making a decision on which body would hold the funds. Cllr Jim Halliday asked for a report at budget setting time which included the date the monies were each received, in order to establish the time left in which the monies were required to be spent.

The Town Clerk updated members on the approach from The Friends of Abingdon Buildings Trust and explained that the Trust required the financial support of both the town and district council support in order to for their proposed project in order to for their NLHF bid to progress. Their timescale for this was by December 2019. The District Council document also stated that the Council should consult with the local community.

It was agreed that the report of the Treasurer / RFO would be reconsidered at the next Full Council meeting.

### F31 **Environmental implications**

Members considered the environmental implications in relation to matters on the agenda. Use of electric / hybrid vehicles had previously been discussed. Cllr Samantha Bowring reminded members that the technology in relation to electric vehicles did not, as yet, extend to the type of vehicles required by the Council. It was also noted that the most environmentally friendly option at the present is to

retain the current vehicles rather than replace, as the latter had a major environmental impact in relation to the manufacture of vehicles.

No other environmental implications were identified.

F32 **Publicity**

Members considered publicity matters. Cllr Ulrike Rowbottom suggested the declaration of a Climate Emergency in Abingdon should be more widely publicised. This was discussed in some detail and members agreed that the Council should publicise events and activities of the Council which will go some way to mitigate the climate emergency as these events and activities arise.

F33 **Dates of meetings**

The committee noted the dates of future meetings:

14<sup>th</sup> January 2020 (budget)  
21<sup>st</sup> January 2020  
17<sup>th</sup> March 2020  
16<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**SECTION II (Confidential)**

F34 **Confidential Report of the Town Clerk**

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

**Matters referred**

**Amenities and Recreation Committee Meeting 4<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

It was noted that a New Cemetery Working Group had been established, comprising of Cllrs Eric de la Harpe, Jeanette Halliday and Jim Halliday. It was agreed that the matter of membership should also be placed on the Town Council agenda to see if any other members were interested in serving on the group.

After some discussion, the committee agreed the **recommendations to Full Council** contained within the report. *See the confidential appendix to these minutes.*

**Guildhall Committee Meeting 16<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

The committee considered property matters and agreed **recommendations to Full Council**. *See the confidential appendix to these minutes.*

### **Bus Services Working Group**

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk together with the notes of the working group meetings of 12<sup>th</sup> July and 15<sup>th</sup> August 2019. See *the confidential appendix to these minutes*.

### **IT Working Group**

The committee considered recommendations relating to the report “IT Infrastructure Road Map and Planning” from the Council’s IT support company.

It was **resolved that**:

- (i) The Council replace the servers at Roysse Court;
- (ii) Microsoft Office 365 with Vipre Email security be installed;
- (iii) Authority be delegated to the IT Working Group to progress matters in accordance with the IT Infrastructure Road Map and Planning document (18<sup>th</sup> June 2019) and that budget for this work be drawn from the computer equipment budget (£10,000) and the remainder from the pooled equipment budget.

### **Property Matters – Roysse Court**

The committee considered the report of the Town Clerk. It was agreed that a further report be presented to the special meeting of the Council, provisionally to be held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2019 outlining all the options for the future location of the Information Office.

### **Fairs**

The committee considered the report of the Town Clerk. See *confidential appendix to these minutes*.

### **Residents’ Parking Scheme**

Members considered the report of the Town Clerk and made **RECOMMENDATIONS** to Full Council. See *confidential appendix to these minutes*.

It was **resolved** that the Town Clerk request an update from the District Council in relation to progress relating to Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE), stressing to them that the Council was keen for progress to be made in this regard and also requesting an updated timescale in relation to this matter.

It was noted that the matter of CPE had been under discussion by the County and District Councils for some years but that the Town Council had no control over the timescales in this regard.

The meeting rose at 10:33pm.