

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council
Draft Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee
on Thursday 21st July 2016 at 7.00pm
in the Roysse Room, Guildhall, Abingdon-on-Thames.

Present

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

In Attendance

Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk
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)

F80 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Jan Morter.

F81 **Declarations of interest**

None.

F82 **Minutes**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 8th March 2016 and 9th May 2016.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 8th March 2016 and 9th May 2016 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

F83 **Matters Arising**

F96 – Cllr Michael Badcock, Chairman of Personnel Committee explained that the request for photographs of the Council's workforce to be circulated to the members has been considered and declined, on the basis that at least one member of staff was opposed to this for valid reasons.

F84 **Statements and Questions from the Public**

The Chairman explained that notice had been given by a member of the public, Mr Justin Andrewes, to attend and speak at this meeting, but had failed to turn up. Instead a copy of a statement was received by email at the Town Council offices this evening. As this was received after 5pm this was not read out at this meeting. A copy will be circulated to all members following the meeting.

F85 **Matters Referred from the Town Council**

The committee received and considered a report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above.

It was reported that at the Council meeting of 29th June 2016 it had been proposed by Cllr Neil Fawcett and seconded by Cllr Samantha Bowring that:

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council will increase the community fund by up to £60,000 to help fund Children's services in Abingdon that would otherwise disappear when Oxfordshire County Council reduces funding. This will partly funded by efficiency savings across Town Council service areas.

This had been referred to the Committee under standing order 2. Under this standing order this Committee would then report back to the next ordinary Council meeting in relation to this matter.

Cllr Sandy Lovatt stated that he had attended meetings of the Children's Centres Advisory Group and also the OCC Locality meeting. Cllr Lovatt believed that the council needed much more about the proposals before it could approve £60,000.

As the proposer of the motion to the Council, Cllr Samantha Bowring explained that the proposal was for up to £60,000 and may not require the full amount. She explained that it was difficult for the groups to produce a business plan if they did not know what grant funding they will receive. A grant from Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council would open doors for them as it is often a criteria of other grant awarding bodies that an applicant is already receiving a council grant. There was an urgency to this as any business plan

needed to be in place by 21st October 2016. She stated that she was aware of Cllr Sandy Lovatt's work in relation to the North Abingdon centre but there was also a pressing need in relation to the South Abingdon centre which served one of the most deprived areas of the country. Cllr Bowring continued by saying that she believed that early intervention saves money later. Lots of other agencies are not responsible for children's centres either but they are willing to offer financial support.

In discussions the following points were made by Members:

- Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council should not be funding this as it is outside the remit of the town council and the council should not be covering the county council's role. There was concern as to where this might end.
- The proposal put forward was for up to £60,000 over the next 5-10 years. This could amount to as much as £600,000 which was a significant amount. It was not certain that the Council could identify sufficient savings elsewhere to cover this and reminded members that the setting of the current year budget had been difficult enough already. She also reminded members that the Council was facing its own areas of significant spending with the Guildhall project. The Council should also see how other partners may be able to assist.
- The Chairman, Cllr Mike Badcock, asked Cllr Bowring to explain where she envisaged the required savings across the town council would come from. Cllr Bowring replied that she believed this was an operational matter and would suggest setting a target for officers to identify these.
- There is still some uncertainty on the full picture of children's' centres and wondered whether the change of government may have an impact on local government funding.
- The services already provided by Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council were under pressure. She suggested that rather than agree a sum of money now, the Council should consider individual applications when they are received.
- Although agreeing with the proposal in principle, the Member did not agree with the approach taken by Cllr Bowring. He was against the proposal to set aside £60,000 each year but believes the Council should remain mindful to any role Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council may be able to play. He suggested that the Abingdon Group should draw up a proper plan and contact the County Council.
- The group should be able to write a business plan without knowing what funding they have. Cllr Samantha Bowring responded that the first draft of such a plan was almost finished but it is very much a work in progress.

The Chairman, Cllr Mike Badcock, then put the proposal to the vote that:

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council will increase the community fund by up to £60,000 to help fund Children's services in Abingdon that would otherwise

disappear when Oxfordshire County Council reduces funding. This will partly funded by efficiency savings across Town Council service areas.

The requisite number of members then requested a named vote on the proposal and it was recorded:

For
Cllr Samantha Bowring
Cllr Helen Pighills

Against
Cllr Mike Badcock
Cllr Dennis Garrett
Cllr Monica Lovatt
Cllr Sandy Lovatt
Cllr David Pope
Cllr Andrew Todd

Abstentions
Cllr Jeanette Halliday
Cllr Alice Badcock

RECOMMENDED: that the Council not approve the above proposal.

It was agreed that a press release would be issued the next day.

F86 **Environmental Working Group**

The Committee received and considered a report of the meetings of the Environmental Working Group held on 16th March 2016 and 25th May 2016.

The recommendation to explore the feasibility of introducing electric vehicles in to the Council's works team fleet as vehicles need to be replaced was approved.

The recommendation that Dr Sally Reynolds (Abingdon Carbon Cutters) be co-opted to the Environmental Working Group for the municipal year 2016/17 was approved.

The Committee considered the position of co-opted Members regarding the Code of Conduct. It was noted that there were two co-opted Members, Dr Sally Reynolds and Mr Peter Clare (County Hall Museum Management Committee).

RESOLVED:

1. That Dr Sally Reynolds be co-opted to the Environmental Working Group for the Council year 2016/17.
- 2.. That co-opted members be asked to signed part 1 of the Members' Code of Conduct before their co-option becomes effective.

F87 **Financial Report**

The committee received and considered the report of the Treasurer / RFO. Regarding the schedule of accounts, a Member highlighted some items of expenditure which may be reduced in future years.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- (a) The Management Accounts for the period 1st April 2016 to 30th June 2016 be approved;
- (b) The schedule of accounts for the period from 1st February 2016 to 30th June 2016 be approved.

F88 **Guildhall Development project**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above.

Cllr Dennis Garrett, Chairman of the Guildhall Committee advised that the public consultation day was planned for Saturday 23rd July 2016.

The Town Clerk advised that subject to approval of special meetings due to take place in August 2016 the works would then be going out to tender.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

F89 **Update on Abingdon Business Improvement District (BID)**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above. Cllr Sandy Lovatt declared a non-pecuniary interest as a co-opted member of the BID Management Committee.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Council apply to become a registered member of Abingdon BID.
2. That the Town Clerk, as the Council's Proper Officer, be authorised to vote on any matters on behalf of the Council as a registered member of the BID subject to:
 - (i) The vote(s) being cast on behalf of the Council in accordance with this Committee's resolution.
 - (ii) If timescale as such that there is no committee resolution in place, then any vote being cast in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of this Committee.
2. That the BID team be invited to present to the next Full Council meeting.

F90 **Publicity**

It was agreed to issue a press release on the motion regarding funding of the children's centres.

SECTION II (Excluding the public and the press)

F91 **Exclusion of the public, including the press**

It was moved by the Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Mike Badcock and **RESOLVED:**

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.

F92 **Confidential appendix**

The committee received and considered the draft confidential appendix to the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of 8th March 2016.

It was **RESOLVED** that: the draft confidential appendix of the meeting of 8th March 2016 be approved as a correct record.

F93 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

F94 **Matters referred from other Committees**

There were no matters referred from other Committees not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

F95 **Property matters**

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

It was **RESOLVED** that: the report and the recommendations contained therein be approved (see Confidential Appendix to these minutes).

The meeting rose at 8:15 pm.