

**Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council
Draft Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting
on Tuesday 27th March 2018 at 7.00pm
in the Røsse Room, Guildhall, Abingdon-on-Thames.**

Cllr Mike Badcock	Chairman
Cllr Dennis Garrett	Vice-Chairman and Chairman of Guildhall Committee
Cllr Samantha Bowring	
Cllr Margaret Crick	Chairman of Planning, Highways & Consultations
Cllr Vicky Jenkins	Chairman of Community Services Committee
Cllr Monica Lovatt	Chairman of CH Museum Management Committee
Cllr Sandy Lovatt	
Cllr Helen Pighills	
Cllr Andrew Todd	

In Attendance

Cllr Robert Hall	
Mr Steve Rich	Head of Services/Assistant Town Clerk
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)

F67 Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllrs Alice Badcock and Jan Morter.

F68 Declarations of interest

Cllr Sandy Lovatt declared that he attends Abingdon BID meetings as a representative of Vale of White Horse District Council. This was a non-pecuniary interest.

F69 Statements and Questions from the public

Statements and questions were presented by representatives of Abingdon businesses:

- 1) Frank Watters spoke on behalf of Simon Escreet, who was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Watters read out a letter which 102 businesses had signed and sent to Mark Stone, Chief Executive of Vale of White Horse District Council. This letter was in response to queries raised at the recent meeting attended by Mr. Stone and business representatives at which the business owners raised their concerns. (*Subsequent to the meeting, a copy of the letter was passed to the Town Clerk for information*).

- 2) Shaun Corrigan asked about Cllr Sandy Lovatt's involvement in the BID and a requested a written response which could be shared with all Abingdon BID levy payers.

The Chairman, Cllr Mike Badcock explained that, in relation to Abingdon BID, Cllr Lovatt was a representative of the district council and not the town council. Cllr Badcock stated that this was a question for the Vale of White Horse District Council. However, Cllr Badcock suggested to Cllr Lovatt that he was free to respond at this meeting if he wished. Cllr Lovatt chose to respond and stated that he has attended Abingdon BID meetings since September 2017 when a district council officer stopped attending the meetings. Cllr Lovatt explained that he is not a member of the Board and attends the meetings as a representative of the district council and nothing more.

- 3) Frank Watters summarized, in his opinion, what the BID has achieved for the town. The main points made were:
- BID Board appointed an operating company, In Publications
 - Since July 2017 the Board has refused to hold an annual general meeting
 - No detailed accounts have been published by the operating company
 - The BID Board continued to support the operating company

Mr. Watters stated that footfall into the town has decreased since the BID began and that the levy has caused significant financial hardship for several business owners. He stated that 102 levy payers do not believe that the BID Board is fit for purpose and called upon councilors to support these businesses, who wish for the BID to be closed down.

The Chairman, Cllr Mike Badcock stated that Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council is fully supportive of all traders in the town and suggested to members that the council could write to Vale of White Horse District Council and ask for a quick resolution. It was agreed that this would be considered at the next Full Council meeting on 25th April 2018.

Cllr Sandy Lovatt reminded members that the town council originally supported the BID proposal because of the demise of Choose Abingdon Partnership (ChAP) which meant that there would be no funding available for town initiatives. Cllr Lovatt stated that the council will need to consider how to move forward with the town's development if the BID is closed down.

Cllr Samantha Bowring asked for the legal position regarding Abingdon BID being able to be abolished. It was agreed that the Town Clerk will write to Vale of White Horse District Council and obtain clarification on the legal implications of any district council decisions made over the future of the BID.

Cllr Badcock thanked Mr. Watters and Mr. Corrigan for attending. Mr. Watters and Mr. Corrigan then left the meeting.

F70 **Minutes and matters arising**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 26th February 2018. Cllr Vicky Jenkins informed the committee that the numbering of the minutes was incorrect.

Cllr Mike Badcock updated the committee on progress in relation to minute F56 (corrected to F60): the bridge at Ock Valley Walk. The replacement bridge has now been delivered and will be installed the following week. Reports have been received that the bridge closure notices have regularly been removed. Mr Steve Rich, Head of Services, explained that he is already aware of this and it is unfortunately a daily occurrence. The works team are regularly replacing the notices in order to minimize disruption to the public.

Regarding minute F57 (corrected to F61), the Town Clerk explained that a written response has been drafted to Dr. Jim Halliday and this will be emailed to him. The response, along with the question asked is shown below:

Question:

Please could the Leader prepare a written note for circulation at the start of the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting of 26th February 2018, and subsequent inclusion in the committee minutes, detailing the following information about the expenditure of the £1.2M capital sum assigned in 2011 for improvements to the Guildhall & Abbey Hall : For each of capital improvements works either contracted, or carried out to date, a brief description of the work, the cost, and the date the work was contracted/invoiced; and the balance of the £1.2M sum that remains to be spent.

Response:

Dear Dr Halliday

Further to your question to the Leader, Cllr Mike Badcock, at the last Finance and General Purposes Committee, the response is as follows:

At the last meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee I reported:

- That in 2011 the Town Council received a sum of £1,200,000 from the District Council as a capital improvement sum.*
- That in 2012 the Council made improvements to the historic parts of the Guildhall through Phase 1 of the Guildhall Improvement Project. Costs amounting to £180,514 were funded from the capital improvement sum and comprised:*

<i>Building works</i>	<i>£149,807</i>
<i>Professional and project-related fees</i>	<i>£27,132</i>
<i>Other Related costs</i>	<i>£3,575</i>

My apologies I was intending to report further to you before now with a written response with the further information which you requested. I can now respond to you as follows:

- *No further drawings were made against the capital sum until the current financial year, 2017/18.*
- *The remaining sum of £1,019,486 was allocated to current Guildhall projects which are detailed on the minutes of the Council meeting of 18th October 2017.*
- *In terms of what the Council is currently committed to/ has spent, the details are as follows:*
 - *The Council approved the placing of a contract for: Building of link corridor from the Guildhall to Roysse Court and extension for new ground floor toilets and muniment room; Improvement works to Bridge Street reception and disabled access from Reception to the Old Magistrates' Court; Re-paving and associated works, Roysse Court; Associated works including insulation of the Roysse Room ceiling and provision for underpinning works to chimney adjacent to the Roysse Room. The contract is with Inside Out Developments Limited and is in the sum of £400,727. The works on site commenced in January 2018 and to date £60,000 of works have been certified and payments made accordingly (less the retention sum). The latest estimate, as of today 27th March 2017, in terms of the projected final contract cost is £452,659. The main additions to contract include the removal of the external ramp, damp ingress to kitchen, uplighters to light building and miscellaneous works required to comply with building regulations. It should also be noted that a contingency sum was not allowed for within the contract itself.*
 - *Leys Longden & Co Chartered Building Surveyors are acting as the Council's surveyors, contract administrators and planning super visors in relation to the building works. Leys Longden professional fees in relation to the building contract are estimated to amount to £45,266 of which £30,050 has been paid. There are also disbursements amounting to £2,029 (planning / building regulation fees).*
- *Finally, although not part of the question there is a total of £17,370.70 of related expenditure in the Guildhall Project capital cost centre for the financial year to date which is being funded from revenue.*

Yours sincerely

*Nigel Warner
Town Clerk*

Regarding minute F62 (corrected to F66), Cllr Monica Lovatt suggested that a representative from SSAFA be invited to join the working group.

Resolved: that, subject to the amendment in numbering stated above, the minutes of the special meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 26th February 2018 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

F71 **Matters referred**

An item was referred from the Guildhall Committee, discussed at its meeting on 19th March 2018, in relation to the Space to Change Toilet. The Town Clerk advised members that this would be considered at agenda item 10 (see minute F76).

F72 **Finance Report**

The committee received and considered the report of the Treasurer / RFO. In light of the positive comments from the internal auditor regarding the quality of work and documentation provided during his recent visit, Cllr Monica Lovatt commended the Treasurer/RFO and the Finance Assistant for their work.

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

F73 **General Data Protection Regulations**

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

The committee considered the appointment of a Data Protection Officer. Cllr Samantha Bowring asked if the Town Clerk believes he has sufficient capacity to carry out this role. The Town Clerk responded that there is no obvious alternative option at present, and officers are waiting for additional guidance from NALC.

Cllr Sandy Lovatt asked if changes to the way emails can be transferred to members' personal emails will be required in light of the impending legislation. The Town Clerk explained that the council's officers were looking into this matter.

Cllr Dennis Garrett stated that he believed the significant aspect to the new legislation is the time taking to set up the required new processes.

Resolved: that, in the interim, the DPO role would be undertaken by the Town Clerk and this would be revisited once more clarification had been received.

It was **recommended to Full Council** that the following documents be adopted:

- i) Consent Form
- ii) General Privacy Notice
- iii) Staff / Councillors' Privacy Notice
- iv) Subject Access Request Policy
- v) Privacy Policy

F74 **Democratic Matters**

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

- i) The committee considered the draft protocol for recording and filming of Council and Committee meetings. Cllr Andrew Todd asked whether this conflicted with the new GDPR legislation. The Town Clerk replied that he believed there was no conflict and there was a general expectation that if you are in a position of public office you are open to being recorded. It was agreed that a notice should be included in every agenda stating the rights to record or film the proceedings.

It was **recommended to Full Council** that the draft protocol be approved.

- ii) The committee considered the draft calendar of meetings for 2018/19. It was **recommended to Full Council** that the draft calendar be approved.
- iii) The committee considered the recommended changes to the constitution of the Traffic Advisory Committee. Members discussed the wording of part c) regarding a proposed substitution system if nominated members of the committee are unable to attend a meeting. It was proposed by Cllr Mike Badcock and seconded by Cllr Margaret Crick to amend the wording to c) To provide for a substitution system should representatives of the non-council bodies be unable to attend. The committee approved the amendment and it was **recommended to Full Council** that, subject to this amendment, the proposed changes to the constitution of the Traffic Advisory Committee be approved.

F75 **Property Matters: Flood Alleviation**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Services., in relation to flood alleviation works in Abingdon. The report was noted.

F76 **Property Matters**

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

(i) Abbey Hall

Members noted that this would be discussed in the confidential section of the meeting due to the commercial nature of the report (see minute F81).

(ii) Information Centre

Members discussed the potential impact the temporary relocation of the Information Centre could have on the Museum's planned children's activities. The Town Clerk explained that the Town Clerk and Treasurer/Head of Museum Service are in discussions with the museum staff and other locations for these planned activities and shared arrangements are being looked at. The Town Clerk explained that there is no other viable alternative for the location of the information centre.

Cllr Sandy Lovatt questioned whether the environment in the Kempster Room (e.g. lack of natural light) was suitable for the information centre staff to be requested to work in. The Town Clerk acknowledged the reservations but assured members that the information staff had been spoken to about the proposal and they are positive about the impending relocation.

Resolved:

- (a) That the Information Centre be relocated to the Kempster Room until 31st July 2018 and that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to make all necessary arrangements for this to take place. This delegation includes authority for the Town Clerk to incur expenditure within existing revenue budgets and to make necessary staffing arrangements.
- (b) That matters will be reviewed by the relevant committees during the next cycle of meetings.

(iii) Old Magistrates Court – Space to Change

The Town Clerk informed the committee that a quote for the required works has been received from Inside Out Developments Ltd who are the contractors currently working on the Guildhall building works. The Town Clerk will be requesting the quote be reviewed by the council's quantity surveyor to ensure value for money.

It was **recommended to Full Council** that, subject to the professional advice from the quantity surveyor, the required building works for the Space to Change facility be approved and that a variation order be entered into with Inside Out Developments Ltd to complete these works. *See Confidential Appendix to these*

minutes.

(iv) St. Nicolas Closed Churchyard

The committee discussed the proposal for the town council to take over responsibility of maintaining the closed churchyard. The Town Clerk explained that discussions had already taken place with the church warden and it was expected that the church staff would continue carrying out the maintenance, subsidized by a modest grant from the town council.

Cllr Andrew Todd asked whether any significant repairs were expected over the coming months. The Town Clerk responded that the churchyard was in good condition and no such works were expected.

It was proposed by Cllr Mike Badcock and seconded by Cllr Margaret Crick, and **recommended to Full Council** that the Town Council takes responsibility for the closed churchyard with immediate effect.

F77 Publicity

No items of publicity were agreed at this stage of the meeting. See Minute F81 for publicity items discussed in the confidential section of the meeting.

F78 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.

F79 Civic Matters

The committee received and considered the report of the Assistant Town Clerk / Head of Services in relation to the above. Cllr Mike Badcock thanked the Assistant Town Clerk for his work on this matter. It was agreed that an addendum to the report would be presented to Full Council. *See Confidential Appendix to these minutes.*

It was **recommended to Full Council** that the report, and the procedures and protocols contained therein, be adopted.

F80 Staffing Matters

The committee received and considered a verbal report from the Town Clerk in relation to staffing matters at The Guildhall. The committee discussed the options for the re-opening of the historic rooms and it was agreed that outsourcing the management of the rooms be considered as a potential alternative to running the rooms in-house.

Resolved: that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Guildhall Committee and the Chairman of Finance and General Purposes Committee, to draft an appropriate document outlining the Guildhall service and advertise for Expressions of Interest from experienced event organisers.

F81 **Property Matters – Abbey Hall**

The meeting was attended by Sue and Ian Wiper from The Regal Evesham Limited who gave a presentation to the Committee to support their formal proposal regarding the renting of the Abbey Hall to use as a cinema for the next two years.

Before considering a recommendation to Full Council, the committee asked several questions to Mr. and Mrs. Wiper, relating to the day to day running of a potential cinema in the Abbey Hall, and the implications for users and local residents:

1. Cllr Monica Lovatt asked whether Regal Evesham were anticipating using the bar area. Mr. Wiper replied this would be the intention and the Town Clerk confirmed that the council would not be operating the upstairs bar at all.
2. Cllr Monica Lovatt asked whether the current toilet facilities were suitable and Mrs. Wiper confirmed they were adequate.
3. Cllr Monica Lovatt questioned disability access into the hall. Mrs. Wiper confirmed that the lift at the back of the hall was suitable but they would also be considering additional options, particularly in light of the outcomes from the planned fire risk assessment. The original chair lift on the main stairs was discussed as a potential alternative, subject to repairs / replacement.
4. Cllr Samantha Bowring asked whether Regal Evesham would be open to allowing community groups to use the hall e.g. Model Railway. The Town Clerk reminded members that the council's resolved policy is that the Abbey Hall is closed for any public use, regardless of any offer made to Regal Evesham.
5. Cllr Dennis Garrett asked if the bar would remain open if there were no films showing at certain times during the day. Mr. Wiper replied that this would not be the case, the bar would only be open to provide refreshments during film screenings.
6. Cllr Dennis Garrett questioned the use of the commercial kitchen and whether any use by Regal Evesham could be detrimental to town council bookings in the historic rooms. Mr. Wiper explained that they did not need a kitchen of that size and it could perhaps be possible to section off a small part of the kitchen for their use and the town council retain the rest. The Town Clerk reminded members that there are several aspects of the building

which cannot be separated off and the kitchen is no different.

7. Cllr Monica Lovatt asked whether Regal Evesham recognized any need for soundproofing. Mrs. Wiper confirmed they were aware of potential concerns from the local residents and would be consulting with them at the earliest opportunity. Mrs. Wiper stated that sound level testing would be carried out to determine what was needed. The committee agreed that sound proofing may also be needed between the Abbey Hall area and the historic rooms to ensure that any bookings in those rooms are not negatively impacted by film noise.
8. Cllr Helen Pighills raised concerns regarding people leaving the cinema late at night and also people smoking outside the Abbey Hall. Cllr Pighills stated that it is not necessary the sound of the film screenings which residents are concerned about, but more the noise from cinema users. Mrs. Wiper acknowledged these concerns and agreed it was imperative to develop good relations with the local residents' associations to be able to deal with such potential problems. The Town Clerk stated that it will be a fine balance in allowing the Abbey Hall to be used for public good and reminded members that the Council have been criticized in the past for keeping the Abbey Hall closed.
9. Cllr Andrew Todd asked Regal Evesham whether a two-year lease was sufficient. Mrs. Wiper replied that a two-year lease fitted with the time frame of the ongoing plans of the council's joint working with Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxfordshire County Council. However, they would be very happy to have this extended.
10. Cllr Sandy Lovatt asked if they had agreed a name for the cinema. Mrs. Wiper explained that they have no corporate branding and so whatever was felt to be suitable would work.
11. Cllr Vicky Jenkins asked what the arrangement was with the Unicorn Theatre. Mrs. Wiper replied that it is an informal agreement whereby Regal Evesham are able to have film screenings when the theatre isn't used. Mrs. Wiper explained that they planned to continue with their screenings at the Unicorn.

Cllr Mike Badcock thanked Mr. and Mrs. Wiper for attending and they left the meeting, the time being 9:20pm.

The committee discussed the proposal further and it was then **recommended to Full Council**:

1. That the Council agrees to the principle of renting the Abbey Hall to The Regal Evesham Limited in accordance with their offer of 21st March 2018;
2. That the Regal Evesham Limited be advised of the risk items outlined in the report of the town clerk which are of concern and any agreement will be subject to conclusion in relation to these matters;

3. That resolution of the concerns regarding building management will also be a prerequisite of any agreement.

(See Confidential Appendix to these minutes).

Resolved:

1. That the Town Clerk be authorized to commission the further investigations/surveys in regard to the building, continue negotiations with The Regal Evesham Limited and report back to the Full Council meeting in April 2018.
2. To issue a public statement regarding the intention to accept this offer. *(subsequent to the meeting, a statement was issued to the press and published on the council's website on 30th March 2018).*

The meeting rose at 9:40 pm.

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Chairman

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Date

DRAFT