

## Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

### Draft Minutes of the Meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> June 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 Eric de la Harpe	
Cllr Neil Fawcett	Chair of Community Services Committee
Cllr Andy Foulsham	
Cllr Pat Lonergan	Chair of County Hall Museum Management Committee
Cllr Ulrike Rowbottom	

#### In Attendance

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)

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

#### F20 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Lorraine Oates.

#### F21 **Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### F22 **Minutes**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, held on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

It was **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

F23 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising not already covered in the agenda.

F24 **Statements and Questions from the public**

There were no statements or questions from the public.

F25 **Matters Referred**

The committee received and considered a referral from the Amenities and Recreation Committee meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020. West End Allotment Association had requested an additional £1,000 of funding towards the clearing of land to enable further allotment plots to become available. It was explained that the allotment association had already spent their allowance for 2020-21 and were requesting an advance of their 2021-22 funding.

It was **RECOMMENDED to Full Council** by 7 votes in favour, 2 against and 1 abstention that:

In accordance with its powers under the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908, the request from West End Allotment Association be approved and that an additional grant of £1,000 be awarded for the purpose to improve land as set out in the application. The additional grant to be by supplementary estimate, this sum to be treated as an advance against the 2021-22 grant allocation and the matter reviewed during the budget setting cycle.

F26 **Financial Update**

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

It was agreed that an updated draft Procurement Policy would now be considered at the meeting of this committee on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

Regarding the planned CCLA investment in the Public Sector Deposit Fund, it was **resolved** that the Cllrs Jim Halliday and Pat Lonergan be signatories, along with the Town Clerk and the Treasurer / RFO.

The committee noted the report.

F27 **Coronavirus – COVID-19**

The committee received and considered the reports of the Town Clerk and the Treasurer / RFO.

Members noted the financial costs to date, as detailed in the Treasurer's report. The Treasurer stated that the report was the initial estimate of the net financial impact of the pandemic for the period March – May 2020 and further reports would be issued at the next meeting.

Members then discussed the information provided in the Town Clerk's report. The Town Clerk explained that Mr Steve Rich, Head of Services / Assistant Town Clerk, is working through risk assessments to determine how and when council offices and closed services can resume, and the guidance is changing daily.

Cllr Jim Halliday asked whether staff have appropriate I.T. equipment and peripherals to work in accordance with DSE guidelines. The Town Clerk explained that staff are using a mixture of council owned IT equipment and their own personal computers, and further laptops have been ordered for staff working at home. The Town Clerk confirmed this can be funded by existing budgets.

Cllr Samantha Bowring reminded the meeting that the emergency delegation panel had recommended the purchase of headsets for Members, considering the number of online meetings taking place and also mobile broadband units ("dongles") for members whose internet connection at home was poor. This had been discussed by the I.T. Working Group and agreed to contact individual members to discuss their needs.

It was proposed by Cllr Bowring, seconded by Cllr Andy Foulsham, and **resolved** that any reasonable purchases for members be delegated to the Town Clerk during the lockdown.

The committee thanked all staff for their work during this time, and in particular Miss Louise Brown, Admin Assistant, who has been providing support to the community groups, and the Works Team for their continued presence around the Town.

Thanks were also expressed to Oxford Security Services and Matthew Colliere who have been managing the markets and leading the implementation of, and compliance with, social distancing measures during the regular markets.

## F28 **Community Infrastructure Levy - policy**

The committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk. This included a draft CIL Policy which had been produced by Cllr Samantha Bowring. Cllr Bowring explained that members should review the draft, agree any amendments, and this would then form a recommendation to Full Council.

In the section called Priorities for Expenditure, it was agreed that the following sentence be deleted:

*Over the past decade there has been significant spending on historic buildings, heritage, and culture. This is an important area for the town but there is a need to balance this expenditure with new spending on other areas.*

The committee considered whether the policy should specifically state that CIL monies should fund projects *within the parish* rather than no boundary being stipulated. After much discussion around potential joint working with neighbouring councils and other bodies, it was agreed that the following sentence be added:

*The bulk of the expenditure would be within the parish, but the Council would seek to work with neighbouring parishes and fund projects which were outside the parish where there was a mutual benefit with the neighbouring parishes.*

Cllr Bowring explained that the section on Immediate Priorities reflected the comments from members of the public which were raised at the parish meeting in March 2020, and asked members for further suggestions. Cllr Pat Lonergan suggested a project in which cycle and walking routes within the town could be assigned names. It was agreed this would be referred to the Planning and Highways Consultation Committee for their consideration. With regards to the proposed immediate priority of protecting grass verges, Cllr Jim Halliday questioned the powers of this council to enable this as most grass verges were not owned by the Town Council. It was agreed that the wording be changed to:

Seek to protect grass verges

It was **RECOMMENDED** to **Full Council** that, subject to the changes listed above, the draft policy be approved.

The Town Clerk reminded the committee that once approved, there will be the required period of consultation with the public and other stakeholders, with the aim that the policy be adopted by the Council at the meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

## F29 **Report of the Town Clerk**

The committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk which updated members on progress with the Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Members considered the list of organisations and community groups which have so far been contacted by FERIA Urbanism, and several suggestions of additional groups were made. Cllr Jim Halliday stated that there did not appear to be much involvement of young person's groups. Cllrs Gabby Barody and Andy Foulsham agreed to contact those groups they have direct links with (Cllr Barody – The Foyer and Abingdon Bridge, Cllr Foulsham – support group for parents with children with special needs, and the Scouts and Guides organisations). It was also commented that the intention of FERIA Urbanism to run an “in-person” session in July would not allow those members of the public who will be still be shielding to take part.

The Town Clerk commented that the list of community groups so far contacted by FERIA Urbanism were a cross section of the full list and so he expected a

wider range of organisations to be included once the project is fully underway, and would take back the members' comments to Feria Urbanism.

Cllr Lonergan replied he would be willing to work on the Neighbourhood Development Plan but reminded members that the Neighbourhood Development Plan was to be a community project rather than a council-led one. The committee agreed with Cllr Lonergan's comments but acknowledged that there was still a need for council input as it would be the council's responsibility to deliver the resulting plan. Cllr Lonergan said he would be happy to be involved but commented that everyone's expectations of what can be achieved by the plan needed to be managed.

Cllr Eric De La Harpe asked how the County Council's Local Cycling and Walking Plan would link to the Neighbourhood Plan. Cllr Neil Fawcett replied that he believed the two plans would work hand in hand and can slot in together.

The committee noted the report.

**F30 Environmental implications**

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

**F31 Publicity**

Cllr Jim Halliday suggested that the Council release a statement explaining the work that has been carried out during the pandemic, including the support of the community groups. The committee agreed this would be a good idea and Cllr Halliday agreed to draft a press release.

Cllr Pat Lonergan praised Cllr Neil Fawcett for the succinct Town Crier which had recently been distributed to residents in the Town. Cllr Fawcett thanked Miss Louise Brown, Admin Assistant, for her work on this.

**F32 Dates of meetings**

The committee noted the proposed dates of the future meetings:

21<sup>st</sup> July 2020

13<sup>th</sup> October 2020

24<sup>th</sup> November 2020 (reserve 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020)

9<sup>th</sup> February 2021 (reserve 12<sup>th</sup> / 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021)

30<sup>th</sup> March 2021

15<sup>th</sup> June 2021

The committee noted that the Calendar of Meetings is subject to approval at the Full Council Meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

F33 **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.

*[Cllr Ulrike Rowbottom left the meeting, the time being 8:02pm].*

F34 **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 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

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

F35 **Matters referred from other committees**

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

County Hall Museum Management Committee 28<sup>th</sup> February 2020

The committee **RECOMMENDED** the proposal contained in the report to **Full Council**. *See the Confidential Appendix to these minutes.*

Guildhall Committee 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020

The committee noted the comments in the report and received a verbal update from Cllr Samantha Bowring. *See the Confidential Appendix to these minutes.*

Community Services Committee 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2020

The committee noted the recommendation being made to Full Council (due to the nature of the item, it is required to be considered in the first instance by Full Council and can then be delegated to a committee). It was agreed that the parties involved be invited to present to the Council Meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2020. *See the Confidential Appendix to these minutes.*

Amenities and Recreation Committee 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020

The committee considered matters referred in relation to the Abingdon Michaelmas and Runaway fairs. The Town Clerk explained that given the current pandemic it was not possible to confirm whether the fairs would be taking place in October. However the road closure application would have to be submitted by July 2020. It was reported that the usual cost of these road closures is £2,000. It was understood that if the events did not go ahead then the Council would only be charged for the cost of the legal advertisement, usually advertised four weeks before the closures, and costing £546.34 in 2019. If a decision not to proceed with the Fairs / road closures were to be taken prior to the advertisement the Town Council would not be charged at all.

It was proposed by Cllr Jim Halliday, seconded by Cllr Samantha Bowring and **resolved** that the authority to apply for the road closure for the Michaelmas and Runaway Fairs be delegated to Cllr Halliday (Chair of Amenities and Recreation Committee), Cllr Bowring (Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee) and the Town Clerk. *See the Confidential Appendix to these minutes.*

F36 **Report of the Town Clerk**

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

*See the confidential appendix to these minutes.*

The meeting rose at 9:42pm.

Chair.....

Date.....