

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council
Draft Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee
on Tuesday 12th January 2016 at 7.00pm
in the Roysse Room, Guildhall, Abingdon-on-Thames.

Present

Cllr Sandy Lovatt	Chairman
Cllr Michael Badcock	Vice-Chairman and Chairman of Planning, Highways & Consultations Committee
Cllr Alice Badcock	Chairman of Amenities & Recreation Committee
Cllr Samantha Bowring	
Cllr Dennis Garrett	Chairman of Guildhall Committee
Cllr Vicky Jenkins	
Cllr Patrick Lonergan	
Cllr Monica Lovatt	Chairman of CH Museum Management Committee
Cllr Helen Pighills	Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames (ex-officio)
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

SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)

F62 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Andrew Todd who would arrive late due to work commitments / travelling.

F63 **Declarations of interest**

None.

F64 **Minutes**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 15th December 2015.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 15th December 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

F65 **Matters Arising**

F55 – the Chairman suggested that the recommendation to implement a five year financial plan be put forward as a motion at the next Council meeting by Cllr Samantha Bowring.

F66 **Statements and Questions from the Public**

1. Dr Jim Halliday attended the meeting and asked the following question:

“Please could you advise:

a) If the plan will be reviewed and debated by the F&GP Committee, and if so when?

b) If the Plan will contain a sensitivity analysis of the impact of possible changes to the income stream? (For example, the impact of a variation in letting income by plus 10%, 20% and 30% and minus 10%, 20% and 30%; and the impact of a variation of the cafe/bar income by plus 10%, 20%, and 30% and minus 10%, 20% and 30%).

c) The membership of the working party which is preparing the business plan.”

The Chairman, Cllr Sandy Lovatt, responded as follows:

a) “The minutes of the 15th December state that, “the work continue on the Business Plan and that the Development Working Group be tasked with completing the Business Plan and that authority be delegated to the Working Group so that the Plan is ready for publication by 27th January 2016”.

Therefore, there is no intention for this Committee, or the Town Council to review the business plan after its publication.

The plan will cover a period of five years and will form a basis for the Guildhall’s future budgets. As with all plans, it will be a living document subject to periodic review and adjustment as events unfold.

b) Given the answer to the first part of your question, this is something that should be put to the Chairman of the Guildhall Committee. However, I do not believe that it would be difficult to stress test the impact of any variations to either income or expenditure. Personally, I am not sure how critical such an analysis would be to the credibility or viability of the business plan.

c) The working party developing the business plan comprises the Chairman of the Guildhall Committee, Cllr Dennis Garrett, The Vice-Chairman, Cllr

Mike Badcock, the Leader of the Opposition, Cllr Jan Morter, and Cllr Neil Fawcett.”

2. Mr Cliff Marshall from Abingdon Carbon Cutters attended the meeting and expressed his support for the creation of a neighbourhood plan. Mr Marshall was pleased to note from the agenda that there was a proposal for a budget for such a plan to be included in the Council's proposed estimates for 2016/17. Mr Marshall stated that Abingdon Carbon Cutters would be very interested in becoming involved in the production of such a plan.

F67 **Matters Referred**

Community Services Committee meeting of 24th November 2015

The committee received and considered a report of the Town Clerk regarding the proposal to declare an additional market on the first Friday of every month. If such a market was declared then the operation of the market would be awarded to Thames Valley Farmers Market and would be run using the same market model currently in place for the farmers market held on the third Friday of every month.

Members discussed the implications of such a market and considered the potential it may have on the weekly Monday market. A member raised a query on the difference in the market tolls paid by the Farmers' Market compared with the Monday Charter Market and it was agreed that this be discussed at minute F69.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

the Town Council exercise their power as a local market authority and declare a market on the first Friday of every month for the year 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017.

Planning, Highways and Consultations Committee meeting of 4th January 2016

The Committee considered the recommendation from the above Committee to include an appropriate sum in the budget for 2016/17 to initiate a plan, the form of the plan being subject to a decision by the Council when the results of enquiries of the Vale of the White Horse District Council are known.

Members were in agreement that a sum should be included in the budget and several suggestions regarding the value of the sum were made.

Members then voted on whether to include £10,000 or £30,000 in the 2016/17 budget, the results were 7 members were in favour of £10,000 and 3 members were in favour of £30,000. Cllr Samantha Bowring expressed her concerns that £10,000 would be insufficient for such a plan.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

a sum of £10,000 be included in the proposed revenue budget for 2016/17.

F68 **Community Fund application**

The Committee received and considered the application from Abingdon Bridge. This item was brought forward on the agenda with the agreement of the Committee.

The meeting was attended by Mr Chris Bryan from Abingdon Bridge who gave a verbal presentation to support the grant application. Mr Bryan distributed a leaflet which detailed the areas of work of the charity and explained the need for additional funding due to increased demand for the services the charity offers.

Cllr Alice Badcock queried some of the figures within the accounts submitted with the application and Mr Bryan agreed there could be an error, but needed to ask the Treasurer of the charity. Cllr Badcock requested that if necessary the accounts be corrected and re-submitted.

Mr Bryan confirmed that a grant from the Vale of White Horse District Council had also been applied for. Cllr Mike Badcock asked for clarification from the Town Clerk regarding the personal implications of voting in his role as a Town Councillor, and then voting on a further application from the same charity in his role as a District Councillor. The Town Clerk advised that this would be a matter for the District Council, however he could not see this would be an issue provided Members considered the application without predetermination at the District Council. He pointed out that he understood that it was a condition that the District Council required organisations to have support from the Parish Council in order to obtain a grant from the District Council. Mr Bryan confirmed that the two grant applications are for two different areas of work.

It was proposed by Cllr Sandy Lovatt and seconded by Cllr Mike Badcock that the grant be awarded.

It was **RESOLVED** that:

Subject to corrected accounts being received within 21 days of this meeting, a grant of £2,500 be awarded to Abingdon Bridge from the Community Fund.

(Mr Chris Bryan left the meeting following discussion of this item).

F69 **(a) Schedule of Accounts and (b) Financial Report & Estimates 2016/17**

- (a) The committee received and considered the report of the Treasurer / RFO in relation to the schedule of accounts for the period from 1st August 2015 to 30th November 2015.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report of the Treasurer / RFO be adopted.

- (b) The committee received and considered the report of the Treasurer / RFO in relation of the proposed estimates for 2016/17.

The proposed precept and band D council tax was discussed, in light of the earlier recommendation (minute F67) regarding that £10,000 to be included in the budget for a plan. The Chairman Cllr Sandy Lovatt proposed and the Vice-Chairman Cllr Mike Badcock seconded that the band D council tax be increased from the 2015/16 amount of £110.23 to £115.23 for 2016/17. This would provide sufficient additional funds to cover the required £10,000. The motion was voted on and the result was:

For	-	7
Against	-	1
Abstentions	-	2

Paragraph 9 of the report, relating to fees and charges, was then considered. All fees and charges, with the exception of those relating to Markets were approved by the committee. A Member had queries the differences in tolls levied against the Monday Charter Market and the Farmers' Market. Cllr Alice Badcock, as Vice-Chairman of the Community Services Committee, explained that a full report on the markets had been presented to the Community Services Committee at its previous meeting and that this should be referenced before making a decision. It was agreed that a copy of this report be circulated to all members and that the decision be **deferred** to the full Council meeting on 27th January 2016.

(Cllr Andrew Todd joined the meeting, it being 8:04pm).

The Town Clerk advised that under the Local Code of Conduct there was a general exemption for Members to remain in the meeting and to vote on this matter.

The committee then considered the 2016/17 allowances for members and for the Mayor.

The level of reserves was then considered and all members agreed the levels were sufficient.

Finally, the funding implications for the Guildhall project were considered. Previously it had been resolved that works to the historic rooms of the Guildhall would in principle be funded by the Council's revenue funds, a combination of earmarked reserves, the pooled property funds and the

Guildhall revenue budget. Members considered the shortfall of £79,000 which was detailed in the report of the Treasurer/ RFO and it was proposed by Cllr Dennis Garrett (seconded by Cllr Mike Badcock) that this be funded by increasing the loan by £66,000 so the estimated loan required would be £1 million (as already agreed in principle), and using £13,000 from the Councils' earmarked reserves. Members voted on this proposal and the result was:

For - 10
Against - 0
Abstentions - 1

It was **RECOMMENDED** that:

- (i) The fees and charges relating to the cemetery (with the exception of the charges for the ashes vaults) be increased as detailed in the appendix of the Report of the Treasurer / RFO.
- (ii) The charges for ashes vaults remain unchanged.
- (iii) The fees and charges relating to the Guildhall remain unchanged.
- (iv) The charges for Music in the Park 2016 be:

Adult tickets	£8.00 inc VAT
Children aged 5 – 17 years	£3.00 inc VAT
Children under age of 5	No charge
- (v) In accordance with the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended), the members' allowance for 2016/17 be set at 20% of the basic allowance of Vale of White Horse District Councillors.
- (vi) Travel and subsistence allowances be paid for the following approved duties: attendance at conferences of the National Association of Local Councils, attendance at the County Council Museums Joint Working Party, and attendance at other such meetings outside of the parish as are approved by the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- (vii) In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 Section 15 (5) and 34 (5), the Mayor be paid an annual allowance of £3,238 for 2016/17.
- (viii) The draft budget estimates for 2016/17 be approved in the sum of £1,372,839 (net expenditure).
- (ix) The total net spending provided in the estimates for 2016/17 amounting to £1,372,839 be funded by way of the precept;
- (x) The Council request the District Council to levy a precept, for Town Council purposes, amounting to £1,372,839 for the financial year 2016/17.

- (xi) The general reserve be deemed to be appropriate to the revenue expenditure of the Council and that the earmarked reserves be justified and sufficient in relation to known and potential commitments of the Council.

F69 **Internal Audit**

The Committee received and considered the report from the Internal Auditors, Accounting Solutions Ltd.

It was **RESOLVED** that: the internal audit report be approved.

F70 **Council archives – annual report**

The Committee received and considered the annual report of the Honorary Archivist.

Cllr Helen Pighills explained that the Honorary Archivist, Mrs Jackie Smith, had in the past given a useful talk to incoming councillors and asked if this had happened this year. Officers confirmed this had not been the case and it was agreed that Mrs Smith would be invited to give this talk.

Cllr Samantha Bowring asked if the Council charges members of the public for the service Mrs Smith provides to them (e.g. locating burial records) and it was confirmed that there is no charge.

It was proposed by Cllr Sandy Lovatt (and seconded by Cllr Pat Lonergan) and **RESOLVED** that a vote of thanks be passed to Mrs Smith for her services and hard work.

F71 **Date of next meeting**

Members noted the date of the next meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, it being Tuesday 8th March 2016.

F72 **Publicity**

Members considered items for publicity. Cllr Mike Badcock raised concerns over publicity for the next Bun Throwing. Cllr Badcock felt that this should remain as a local event, and that in previous recent years the size of the crowd has more than doubled. Cllr Badcock was keen to limit advertising in order not to attract too large a crowd. Members agreed accordingly.

SECTION II (Excluding the public and the press)

F73 Exclusion of the public, including the press

It was **RESOLVED** that the Chairman move:

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.

F74 Confidential appendix

The committee received and considered the confidential appendix to the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of 15th December 2015.

It was **RESOLVED** that: the confidential appendix of the meeting of 15th December 2015 be approved as a correct record.

F75 Matters arising

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

F76 Matters referred from other Committees

County Hall Museum Management Committee of 10th November 2015

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk. It was proposed by Cllr Mike Badcock, seconded by Cllr Patrick Lonergan and **RESOLVED** that: the recommendations contained within the report and referred from the meeting of the County Hall Museum Management Committee be approved.

Community Services Committee of 24th November 2015

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Assistant Town Clerk / Head of Services. See the Confidential Appendix.

F77 Staffing matters

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

It was **RESOLVED** that: the report be approved. (no recommendations).

F78 **Service reviews**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk. The review of Community and Civic Services was noted and had been referred to the Community Services Committee for full consideration.

F79 **Council property**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Assistant Town Clerk / Head of Services.

It was proposed by Cllr Alice Badcock and seconded by Cllr Monica Lovatt to accept the recommendations within the report.

It was **RESOLVED** that: the confidential report of the Assistant Town Clerk / Head of Services and the recommendations contained therein be approved.

The meeting rose at 9:10 pm.

DRAFT