

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on Thursday 17th May 2018 at 7:00pm In the Roysse Room, Guildhall, Abingdon

Present:

Cllr Dennis Garrett	Chairman
Cllr Mike Badcock	Vice-Chairman
Cllr Neil Fawcett	
Cllr Robert Hall	
Cllr Jan Morter	
Cllr Margaret Crick	Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames (ex-officio)

In Attendance

Mrs Jo Blackmore	Administrator (Clerk to the meeting)
Mr Huw Edmunds	Huw Edmunds Associates
Mr Jonathan Longden	Leys Longden
Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk
Mrs Susan Whipp	Treasurer/ Responsible Finance Officer
1 member of the public	

G5 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Brian Hedley.

G6 Declarations of Interest

None.

G7 Minutes

G7.1 Members received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee of 19th March 2018, as circulated with the agenda.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee of 19th March 2018 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

G7.2 Members received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee of 9th May 2018.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee of 9th May 2018 be approved.

G8 **Matters arising**

None.

G9 **Public participation**

No statements or questions from those present.

G10 **Guildhall Development Working Group**

(a) Appointment of Guildhall Development Working Group

Resolved:

1. That Cllrs Mike Badcock and Dennis Garrett be appointed to the Guildhall Development Working Group for the municipal year 2018/19.
2. That the Leader of the Opposition advise the Town Clerk in relation to the appointment of the two opposition members to this Group.

(b) Notes of the Guildhall Development Working Group

Members received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Development Working Group of 16th March 2018, 13th April 2018 and 27th April 2018, as circulated with the agenda.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Development Working Group of 16th March 2018, 13th April 2018 and 27th April 2018 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

G11 **Financial Report**

Members received and considered the report of the Treasurer/ Responsible Finance Officer in relation to the Guildhall.

Resolved: that the report of the Treasurer/ Responsible Finance Officer in relation to the Guildhall be approved.

G12 **Guildhall Development Project**

Members received the report of the Town Clerk, as circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk apologised for an error in his report where in relation to the financial update on the project the first line in the second paragraph should read: "Costs have been reviewed by the Working Group and are some

£79,500 above the original contract value of £400,727.” The report went on to state:

“The reasons for this variation are detailed in Mr Longden’s paper. The major variations are a result of an increase scope of works, including the removal of the old ramp on the south side of the building, introduction of uplighters and upgraded toilets (£32,000) and also the undertaking of a number of maintenance items which it has been expedient to deal with during the course of the contract (£37,000). It should be noted that no contingency was provided for within the contract, meaning that variations are considered as they are brought forward. There is a contingency in the overall Project.”

(i) Building works

Mr Jonathan Longden of Leys Longden Chartered Surveyors, reported as follows:

(a) Progress

- The steel for the toilets is due 29/05/2018.
- The landings above the kitchen and boiler room have been stripped and waterproofing due to start 18/05/2018.
- The automatic doors and platform lift have been ordered.
- The stone slabs are due 30/05/2018. While digging the foundations they have encountered a large number of utilities/services.
- Chimney scaffolding is going up next week. Underpinning has been completed.
- Conservation Officer:
 - Is content with the plans for the “Space to Change WC’
 - Very pleased with the discovery of the spiral staircase and would like it to be opened up.

(b) Financial

- Costs are above the original contract value by approximately 20%. This is due to some significant additions to works, which include:
 - Increase in scope of the work such as removal of the ramp and Space to Change.
 - Uplighters to the building.
 - Upgrade of the toilet facilities.
 - Maintenance work to the building.

(c) Space to Change WC

- Application for Listed Building Consent due to be submitted.

- The large external light above the cell door may be a street light (indicated by the numbering on the lights) therefore the County Council needs to be contacted.

(d) Access to the Guildhall

Members received the report from Lord Consultants Ltd (page 34 of the agenda) and Jonathan Longden's letter (page 31). At the meeting the following points were emphasised:

- More information is required on the financial impact of not having a lift to service the rooms.
- The old staircase will require maintenance before the Guildhall reopens.
- Magistrates Court has level street access and could be used for meetings and for hiring out. This would allow reduce pressure on the other ground floor room, the Roysse Room. This would release time for the Roysse Room to be used for more formal functions, weddings, conferences etc
- Delay the project for using the Magistrates Court as a museum exhibition area and storage.

The Committee considered the suggestion in the letter from Leys Longden that the Council take further pre-application advice in relation to the access proposal for a lift and removal of the historic staircase. In seeking this advice, the Council would need to put together a comprehensive portfolio outlining the various issues in relation to the staircase, informed by the various reports and studies and it was further suggested that this be broadened to consider how the lack of proper disabled access to most of the rooms in the Guildhall will impact upon the future viability of the premises. Noting current workload it was suggested that the work in relation to the second pre-application advice be scheduled for September 2018.

It was proposed by Cllr Dennis Garrett, seconded by Cllr Mike Badcock and **resolved**

1. to undertake the further work outlined above and take further pre-application advice in relation to the proposal for the lift and removal of the staircase. The meeting also noted the outlined timescale detailed in the letter from Leys Longden.
2. That the report from Lord Consultants be noted and any additional works in relation to the project be referred to Leys Longden and the Guildhall Development Working Group for consideration and implementation from the Guildhall revenue property budget.
3. That repairs/ maintenance in relation to the historic staircase be commissioned and that a budget of £5,000 be set aside for this purpose.

4. That the Old Magistrates Court be allocated as the principal room for Council committee meetings and also be made available for community meetings until such time as wheelchair access is available for the Council Chamber, Abbey Room and Bear Room.
5. That proposals for the Old Magistrates' Court to be used for Museum exhibition and storage should remain within the Council's plans but that this be linked to the Council's delivery of full access to the other rooms within the Guildhall's suite of buildings.

(Procedural note: matters to be reviewed by the Guildhall Committee following receipt of pre-application advice).

(ii) **Re-opening of the Guildhall for hire by individuals, community groups and commercial organisations and its ongoing operation.**

Members received the report from Huw Edmunds Associates dated 11th May 2018. The Committee noted the work undertaken on page 52 of the agenda.

(a) Logo

Resolved: that the logo for the Guildhall be agreed as on final page of these minutes.

(b) General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

- Previous customers of the Guildhall are being contacted to confirm they wish to remain on the Guildhall contact list.
- Looking into new potential customers.
- Business contacts are not affected by GDPR.

G13 **Exclusion of the Public, including the press**

The Chairman moved and it was **Resolved:**

That in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1060 (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.

G14 **Guildhall Development Project**

Members received the confidential report of the Town Clerk and the confidential report from Huw Edmunds Associates. Note that the reports included projections in relation to income from specific events and estimates of costs of goods/ services yet to be procured, the disclosure of which could adversely affect the future business of the Guildhall and prices obtained. Consequently the report was considered in the confidential session.

(i) Guildhall pricing and Income projections

Members received and considered the “Initial Pricing Thoughts” and “Initial Projection Estimation” contained in the report from Huw Edmunds Associates (pages 78-83).

Huw Edmunds pointed out that the latest Event and Visual Communication Association report listed the average delegate rate achieved by venues as £46 (incl. VAT) therefore it was not unreasonable to charge £50. All profits could then be used to support the building maintenance and community.

(a) Weddings and wedding receptions

- Mr Edmunds stated that weddings generate less revenue due to higher costs to run and individual preferences of customers.
 - Be clear on pricing.
 - Offer a full package.
 - Offer a basic package for local residents.
 - Do not offer too many “in between” options.
 - Make prices available on request so each wedding can be judged individually.
 - Ensure that the council is not losing money on the wedding.
- The Committee considered that there must be an option for residents to hold their wedding in the Guildhall at reasonable cost e.g.
 - Ceremony only. Have a minimum cost for this. Currently Wallingford charge £400.
 - Option to provide their own food at the reception.
- Be aware of the risk that if the charges are too low the venue/package will be seen as poor quality.

The Committee considered the principles in relation to the setting of fees and charges in relation to the Guildhall and recommended to the Finance and General Purposes Committee as follows:

- Subsidised rates for community groups;
- Commercial rates for business meetings, conferences etc.;
- Wedding rates set at realistic level, aware of need for an option for local people who have a limited budget.

(ii) Guildhall relaunch costs – venue marketing

The Committee considered the Guildhall relaunch costs as detailed on pages 84 and 85 of the report from Huw Edmunds Associates, noting that the Committee had budgetary provision for all these items.

(a) Photos

The Committee discussed the need for photos of the Guildhall for publicity material.

- Four days of photography were required in total; two days taking photos of the rooms and two days at opening events.
- Huw Edmunds feels that the existing photos need updating.
- A competitive price has been obtained for these photo shoots.
- Photos to be taken of empty rooms and the rooms laid out.

(b) Website

- The website is ready to go apart from the logo.
- The website could be hosted on the Abingdon Town Council servers.
- Huw Edmunds would like the website to be stand-alone not just a tab on the Abingdon Town Council website.
- The Committee would like to see the website and then decide on where to host it.

(c) Relaunch events

- Huw Edmunds proposed two relaunch events. This was agreed.

Resolved: that the items detailed as venue marketing be approved within existing budgets.

(iii) Equipment/ infrastructure

The Committee considered equipment/ infrastructure requirements as detailed on page 85 of the report from Huw Edmunds Associates.

In discussing matters the following points were made:

- Some funds have already been approved, such as the previously for kitchen improvements.
- Additional expenditure has to be approved by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- All equipment bought and work done must be of good quality.
- A second quote has been received for the kitchen which is less than the first quote and provides modular options. This enables the kitchen to be upgraded as required. However the specifications for the two quotes are different so they cannot be compared.

- Audio/video – an option was to install this into one room in the first instance.
 - Set microphones around the room.
 - Purchase sufficient table microphones.
 - Screens to be moved to the side of the room when not in use.
 - The company who have supplied a quote have offered to demonstrate the proposed system.
 - **Resolved:** that a demonstration of the audio-visual equipment is organised.

The Town Clerk informed the meeting that there is budgetary provision for the kitchen improvements. It was proposed by Cllr Mike Badcock, seconded by Cllr Margaret Crick and **resolved** that authority be delegated to the Guildhall Working to agree the kitchen specification.

The items under Infrastructure on page 85 of Huw Edmunds Confidential Addendum were discussed:

- Implementation of new foyer design; carpeting; brochure rack system; additional catering facilities to be referred to the Finance and General Purpose Committee.
- Budgetary provision for audio-visual equipment to be referred to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- Kitchen – budget provision existing so can be put out to tender, subject to further consideration by the Guildhall Development Working Group regarding specification.
- Water provision – machine. Huw Edmunds to bring in a sample to review.

Cinema

- Suggested that cleaning service for the cinema and Guildhall be combined.

Cllr. Dennis Garrett thanked Jonathan Longden, Huw Edmunds and the members of the Committee and the Guildhall Development Working Group for their continued work.

The meeting rose at 8.15pm.



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