

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on Thursday 5th December 2019 at 7:00 pm In the Old Magistrates Court, Guildhall, Abingdon

Present

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| Cllr Margaret Crick | Chair |
| Cllr Eric de la Harpe | Substitute and Vice-Chair |
| Cllr Cheryl Briggs | |
| Cllr Neil Fawcett | |
| Cllr Charlie Birks | Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames (ex-officio) |

In Attendance

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Mrs Jo Blackmore | Clerk to the Meeting |
| Mr Nigel Warner | Town Clerk |
| Mrs Susan Whipp | Treasurer / Responsible Financial Officer |
| Mr Ian Wiper | The Abbey Cinema |
| Mrs Sue Wiper | The Abbey Cinema |

Abingdon Town Council - Our Vision

To develop an inclusive community so that Abingdon is the place where everyone wants to live and where the wellbeing of residents is prioritised. In developing this community, the town will be one which is environmentally sustainable, vibrant, resilient and safe.

Our key objectives

- 1 To respond effectively and speedily to the climate emergency.
- 2 To develop a resilient, sustainable town which will provide a home for residents now and in the future.
- 3 To manage the Council's assets efficiently and effectively to meet for the needs of the community now and in the future.
- 4 To work with community partners to support those who are vulnerable and in need and to create opportunities to increase social inclusivity.

SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)

G54 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Cllr Samantha Bowring and Cllr Grace Clifton with Cllr Eric de la Harpe is attending as her substitute.

G55 **Declarations of Interest**

None.

G56 **Minutes**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 5th December 2019.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee of 5th December 2019 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

G57 **Matters arising**

Regarding the muniment room, the humidifier and dehumidifier has been confirmed. There had been concerns over the position of the controls and it has been confirmed that the controls are for the service engineers only and they don't see a problem with the position of the controls. The repositioning of the racking due to the humidifier and dehumidifier has been agreed. The room is expected to be available in about three months (June).

G58 **Public participation**

None.

G59 **Green Advisory & Scrutiny Committee**

The Committee received and considered the report of all matters raised at the above committee relating to the work of the Guildhall Committee.

It was **resolved** that the report of all matters raised at the above committee in relation to the work of the Guildhall Committee be approved.

It was noted that the Energy audit has been attached as an appendix to the confidential notes and would be reviewed in the confidential section of the meeting.

G60 **Financial report**

The committee received and considered the financial report of the Treasurer / Responsible Financial Officer.

It was **resolved** that the financial report of the Treasurer / Responsible Financial Officer be approved.

No extra issues were raised.

G61 **Risk Register Annual Update**

The Town Clerk apologised to the committee that the risk register review was underway but hadn't been completed. This is agenda item will be carried forward to the next meeting.

G62 **Police Community Support Officers**

The committee considered the current involvement with the town's PCSOs and felt that the Guildhall was receiving a good service. It was felt that Abingdon Town Council's part funding of one PCSO was beneficiary in keeping good contact with them.

G63 **Publicity**

(The meeting moved onto Agenda item 12)

The committee considered items of publicity in relation to the Guildhall and none were raised.

G64 **Dates of meetings**

The committee considered which day future meetings were to be held on, agreeing to remain with Thursday evening meetings.

The Committee Chair felt that another meeting of this committee may be required before the next scheduled meeting on Thursday 21st May 2020.

G65 **SECTION II Exclusion of the public, including the press**

It was **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.

G66 **Confidential appendix to the minutes**

Members received and considered the Confidential Appendix to the Minutes of the Guildhall Committee on 5th December 2020.

Resolved: that the Confidential Appendix to the Minutes of the Guildhall Committee of 5th December 2019 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

G67 **Guildhall Complex of buildings – property matters**

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

It was **resolved** that the confidential report of the Town Clerk in relation to the Guildhall complex of buildings be approved.

See the Confidential Appendix to these minutes.

It was noted that the lease negotiations are moving along as expected.

It was noted that:

- The Abbey Cinema were not making as much as they had expected. Currently the Guildhall is not making any money.
- The council has agreed to remain with the current operators of the Abbey Cinema.
- The advertising agreement the Abbey Cinema had with Pearl and Dean had expired in February. If the new lease agreements were not reached by end of March it puts the advertising contract in jeopardy. The Guildhall Committee **agreed** to extend the current contract by two months to resolve the advertising issue.
- The Council will not sign any new lease with the Abbey Cinema until any money owing from the Regal Cinemas Evesham has been paid.
- Mr Ian Wiper and Mrs Sue Wiper want to separate the Regal Cinema Evesham and the Abbey Cinema businesses.

G68 **Management and Operation of Guildhall**

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

It was **resolved** that the confidential report of the Town Clerk in relation to the Guildhall complex of buildings be approved

G69 **Guildhall Complex of buildings – Guildhall Property Working Group**

Members received and considered the confidential report and recommendations of the Guildhall Property Working Group.

See the Confidential Appendix to these minutes.

- Concern was raised over how many projects could be managed together.
- Access and lift.
 - Ridge have verbally agreed to have a structural engineer out within a week.
 - Cllr. Charlie Birks raised concerns over additional holes being made in the stairs.
 - It was noted that Mr Ian and Mrs Sue Wiper did not like the idea of a platform lift.
 - Any new lift requires agreement from English Heritage
- Old Magistrates Court
 - There is no D2 building use for this room, required for cinema usage. Any change of use which enhances the value would mean an overage payment was due.
 - The rate of overage decreases in stages but takes forty years to reach zero. Overage payments may mean that it's not worth the change of use.
 - Cllr Neil Fawcett declared a legal interest for the Vale of the White Horse District Council.
 - Option to see how the district council would view occasional usage of the Magistrates Court as a cinema. For when the Abbey Hall is out of action or for film clubs, specialist screenings such as dementia friendly screenings and one off screenings. It was suggested that for temporary usage cinema screenings were shown and wait to see the district council reaction.
 - Suggestion that the Abbey Cinema pays any surveyors fees required.
 - A one off showing of the Attenborough environmental film on 16th April was **agreed**. The commercial rate for the room would be charged.
- Heating and boilers
 - **Action:** to investigate the feasibility of changing the Abbey Close entrance back doors to make them more energy efficient.
- Minor works
 - **Action:** to create and maintain a list of smaller jobs.
- Cycle racks
 - The Guildhall Committee to fund these.

It was **resolved** that the confidential report and recommendations of the Guildhall Property Working Group, be approved and all decisions required be undertaken by the Guildhall Property Working Group.

The Committee received and considered the Energy Saving Recommendations Report.

It was **resolved** that all decisions and actions required to be undertaken by the Guildhall Property Working Group.

The committee then returned to the open session of the meeting.

SECTION III (Open to the Public Including the Press)

G70 Guildhall and Cinema services – operation and management

(Agenda item 10)

[Mr Ian Wiper and Mrs Sue Wiper of The Abbey Cinema entered the meeting, the time being 8:25pm]

Mr Ian Wiper and Mrs Sue Wiper gave a verbal update on recent activities at the Guildhall summarising that they felt overall it was going very well. There was a good working relationship between the Abbey Cinema and the town council, lots of local residents were using the building and the building was being used more with increasingly diverse groups and users. They had made a bad call on the cost of running the Guildhall but as commercial bookings were increasing this should compensate. Wedding bookings were really not going to reflect in the bookings until the 2021 wedding season. They felt that the first year had been a learning process on both sides.

The Abbey Cinema is drafting a document outlining the requirements they have identified as necessary for running the Guildhall.

- The Guildhall Committee responded that a special meeting would be required to review this list and refer it to members with recommendations for approval.

Passenger lift.

Mr Ian Wiper confirmed that they were not currently using the lift. For six weeks they ran the lift three times a day empty and everything was ok then it failed again with customers in. They feel that there is no consistent reason for the failure. The Guildhall Committee stated that if the lift was used in the future a staff member must accompany anyone who uses the passenger lift.

The committee thanked Mr and Mrs Wiper for attending the meeting.

[Mr Ian Wiper and Mrs Sue Wiper left the meeting, the time being 8:40pm].

The committee then returned to the confidential section of the meeting.

SECTION IV Exclusion of the public, including the press

See the Confidential Appendix to these minutes.

The Town Clerk informed the meeting:

- That each month the Abbey Cinema retained a certain amount and after that there was a 60/40 split. However the Town Clerk felt that the Abbey Cinema may wish to retain larger share of the split in future.

- The community rate was never expected to cover costs as commercial bookings were expected to make up for this, however the balance between the two may be happening slower than expected.
- The old side / Guildhall was playing second to the cinema.
- The Wipers had a learning curve to adapt to running Abingdon as it was more complicated than their Evesham operation.
- Word that the Guildhall had reopened was spreading.

Silver Cabinet

The matter of reinstating the Silver Cabinet was raised. It was noted that this would be very resource intensive. The Guildhall committee **recommended** that the plan for the Silver Cabinet was outsourced. The Town Clerk is to look into this.

The committee then returned to the open session of the meeting.

SECTION V (Open to the Public Including the Press)

G71 Environmental implications

The committee considered the environmental implications in relation to items on the agenda.

No issues were raised concerning environmental implications which had not already been considered elsewhere on the agenda.

The meeting rose at 8:50 pm.

Signed.....

Date.....