

## Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

### Minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2018 at 7.00pm In the Roysse Room, Guildhall, Abingdon

#### Present:

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

#### In Attendance

Mrs Jo Blackmore	Administrator (Clerk to the meeting)
Mr Jonathan Longden	Leys Longden
Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk

#### G25 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Neil Fawcett, Cllr Brian Hedley and Cllr Jan Morter.

#### G26 Declarations of Interest

None.

#### G27 Notes of Minutes of meeting 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018

Members received and considered the minutes of the Guildhall Committee of 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

**Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee of 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### G28 Matters arising

None.

#### G29 Public Participation

Dr Jim Halliday read out a statement about the broadband in the Town Centre.

Dr Halliday stated that he had read in Committee papers that the WiFi capability in the Guildhall would be compromised by the slow broadband speeds.

Dr Halliday advised Members that the Government, County and District Councils had put together a £35M scheme to deliver high-speed broadband to properties in Oxfordshire which would, through the market, not have received high-speed broadband. This meant that 96% of properties in the area could now be served by high-speed broadband but unfortunately this improved coverage had not extended to Abingdon town centre. This was because it had previously been considered that high speed broadband provision in the town centre was commercially viable and therefore not requiring subsidy.

Indeed BT Open reach had planned to upgrade two town centre cabinets but this plan had been cancelled in July 2018 on the grounds that it was not commercially viable at present for them to proceed. The county-wide assessment of commercial viability (the Open Market review) would not be repeated until three years after the last review, by which time the current subsidy scheme would have finished.

Dr Halliday stated that there were various Government grants available to upgrade broadband but it seemed that these were more applicable to village communities, and required a group of affected people/businesses to progress this matter but finding out who was affected was difficult as this information was deemed “commercially sensitive.”

He asked if the Town Council would be willing to work with local residents to press for broadband speeds in the town centre to be improved.

Bobbie Nicholls stated that the Friends of Abingdon had the same problem and would support moves to put pressure on broadband providers to upgrade services.

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Mike Badcock, thanked Dr Halliday for his interest in this matter and indicated his willingness to work with Dr Halliday and others in this regard. He suggested that Dr Halliday should raise this matter directly with the Town Council at its meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2018.

### **G30 Guildhall Development Working Group**

Members received and considered the minutes of the Guildhall Development Working Group of 22<sup>nd</sup> June and 17<sup>th</sup> August 2018. Members also received a verbal update of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

**Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Development Working Group 22<sup>nd</sup> June and 17<sup>th</sup> August 2018 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to:

- (i) Financial update on the building project/ contract with Inside Out
- (ii) Guildhall Projects – budget estimates update

Following discussion it was proposed by Cllr Margaret Crick, seconded by Cllr Mike Badcock and **resolved**:

- (i) To approve the report of the Town Clerk;
- (ii) To approve the financial update in relation to the building project/ contract with Inside Out and endorse all related variations in the project to date.
- (iii) To approve the budget estimates update in relation to the Guildhall Project, including the transfers between the budget lines as reported.

For ease of reference these reports are attached as an appendix to these minutes.

#### G31 **Financial report**

Members received and considered the report of the Treasurer/ Responsible Financial Officer in relation to the above.

It was proposed by Cllr Mike Badcock, seconded by Cllr Robert Hall and **resolved** that the report of the Treasurer/ Responsible Financial Officer in relation to the above be approved.

#### G32 **Management and operation of the Guildhall**

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to the Management and operation of the Guildhall.

It was reported that following a tender exercise in relation to the above, two bids had been received for the management and operation of the Guildhall. The Regal (Evesham) were awarded the tender, subject to contract. The Regal are also operating the cinema at the Abbey Hall.

The specification on which the contract will be based was attached the report.

It was reported that the panel of Members which selected the contractor was of the view that the contract period should be two years rather than the one year originally offered. Whilst the Town Clerk considered that he had delegated powers to increase the contract period accordingly Members had been requested, by way of e-mail of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2018, which also informed Members of the decision regarding the tender, to inform the Town Clerk if they were not content on the variation in relation to the term of the contract. No objections

were received and the decision was subsequently endorsed by the Guildhall Development Working Group at its meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> August 2018.

It was reported that the tender was subject to contract and the commercial terms were therefore in a confidential report. However the officers considered that, based on the tender, the arrangement would be beneficial to both the Council and the contractor and yield a significant revenue saving to the Council.

It was proposed by Cllr Robert Hall, seconded by Cllr Margaret Crick and **resolved** that:

- (i) The report of the Town Clerk in relation to the Management and operation of the Guildhall be approved.
- (ii) The Committee endorse the actions taken under delegated powers since the last meeting.

#### Other items

- Council would be working with the Regal in relation to audio-visual installation.
- Consideration being given to upgrade of CCTV.
- Silver Cabinet. The doors were due to be fixed but the basic structure would require upgrading at a future date.

The meeting was informed that a number of members of the public have complimented “the good team of builders”. Members and officers agreed that the team had worked hard and were a credit to the contractors.

The Mayor, Cllr Margaret Crick, requested that Jonathan Longden to talk to site manager Terry Long regarding an appropriate way to thank the team at Inside Out.

#### G33 **Additional item in relation to the Guildhall Development Project**

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to an additional item in relation to the Guildhall Development.

#### Recommendations of the Amenities and Recreation Committee in relation to the Roysse Court garden

The Amenities & Recreation Committee of 12<sup>th</sup> September 2018 had discussed the Roysse Court garden and made a number of recommendations.

### Benches and Floral displays

Following discussion it was proposed by Cllr Margaret Crick, seconded by Cllr Robert Hall and **resolved** that the following be purchased to complete the refurbishment of the Roysse Court Garden:

- World War One Memorial Bench £896
- World War Two Memorial Bench £896
- Planter for floral display £873 plus any inscription at £3.95 per letter.
- Two Hanging basket Trees £700 each approx. price.

*Note: The Amenities and Recreation Committee had agreed that this be funded from the Street Furniture budget.*

### Flagpoles

The Amenities and Recreation Committee also requested the Guildhall Committee consider installing three flag poles in the Roysse Court Garden to complete the refurbishment, noting that the Amenities and Recreation Committee had also agreed that any expenditure in this regard would be funded from the Street Furniture budget.

It was noted that the matter had previously been considered by the Council in autumn 2017 when the plans had been taken out of the Guildhall project and so would require a decision by the Town Council. In discussion Members asked that the height of the flagpoles should be appropriate to the location and consideration be given to a policy in relation to which flags may be flown and the mechanism for agreement in this regard.

In It was proposed by Cllr Dennis Garrett, seconded by Cllr Robert Hall and **recommended** to the Town Council through the Finance and General Purposes Committee that three flag poles be installed in the Roysse Court gardens.

### G34 **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.

G35 **Guildhall Development Working Group, Capital Improvement Project and Outsourcing of the management and operation of the Guildhall**

Members received the confidential report of the Town Clerk of 13<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

Contract matters - Inside Out Developments

The Committee considered matters in relation to the building contract.

**Resolved:** that authority be delegated to the Guildhall Development Working Group to determine and agree the matters outlined in the report.

Guildhall complex – Emergency lighting

Emergency Lighting in relation to the Abbey Hall, Guildhall, Old Magistrates Court and Roysse Court. The specification represented a significant upgrade on the existing systems over a very large and complex building. The Committee was of the view that this was an important area where the Council should install the best possible system to protect all users. Members emphasized that the Roysse Court offices should be of the same high specification as the rest of the Guildhall complex.

**Resolved:** that expenditure of £67,040 be approved in relation to the emergency lighting system.

Kitchen

It was noted that tenders had been received in relation to the above and were being evaluated.

**Resolved:** that authority be delegated to the Guildhall Development Working Group to commission works in relation to the kitchen and that the Working Group be authorised to draw on the sum set aside for the kitchen and Project contingency to fund such works.

Management and operation of the Guildhall by the Regal

The financial arrangements had been advised to all Members on 31<sup>st</sup> July and 15<sup>th</sup> August 2018. In accordance with the specification the Regal would be providing management, staffing, customer service including telephone Guildhall reception website/booking, marketing and technical support.

If matters proceeded as planned and as per tender it was stated that this should yield a significant annual revenue saving. A further report would be submitted to the Finance and General Purposes Committee of 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2018.

**Resolved:** that the Committee endorse all the decisions made to date, in relation to the above.

The meeting rose at 7.48 pm.

**ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL**  
**MEETING OF THE GUILDHALL COMMITTEE**  
**THURSDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2018**

**Agenda item 6: Guildhall Development Working Group**

**Working Group meetings**

1. The Working Group has the responsibility for overall management of the ongoing project and making decisions on the project as it progresses. The notes of the meetings of 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2018 (which were previously considered in short-form by this Committee on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2018) and 17<sup>th</sup> August 2018 are attached to this report. A verbal report of the Working Group of 10<sup>th</sup> September 2018 will be made at the meeting.

**Financial update on the building project/ contract with Inside Out**

2. The financial update in relation to the building works/ contract with Inside Out is attached and was considered by the Working Group at its meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> September 2018.
3. The contract sum is now shown as £722,080 compared with the sum reported in June 2018 of £576,227, an increase of £145,853. The major variations against the original contract sum are a result of an increased scope of works, including the removal of the old ramp on the south side of the building, introduction of uplighters and upgraded toilets, the Space for Change WC and proposed alterations to the Old Magistrates Court. However the major variation since the last meeting relates to the installation of a new fire alarm and detection system across the Guildhall, Abbey Hall, Old Magistrates Court and Roysse Court. These are essential works which are necessary ahead of re-opening and the cost amounts to £98,893. This is detailed in the Working Group notes of 17<sup>th</sup> August 2018 and approved by that meeting from the improvement budget. There have also been other works to undertake which could not have reasonably been foreseen ahead of commissioning the work.

**Cinema**

4. The project to open a cinema at the Abbey Hall is under the responsibility of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The objectives and the progress on this project are very positive but it should be noted here that this project has had a significant impact on the Guildhall project and this should not be underestimated. Firstly, your officers have taken on a major project which some 12 months ago was not planned and therefore this has diluted the resource available for other Council work and the Guildhall project more generally, leading to delays in some areas. Secondly it has now become very clear that the Guildhall and the Abbey Hall can only ever be considered as one building and plans for the Abbey Hall have had a consequential “knock on” to the



Guildhall Project, for instance in relation to fire alarms/ detection and emergency lighting.

5. In terms of the other changes between the June and September 2018 these are also detailed in the Working Group notes of 17<sup>th</sup> August 2018.
6. With builders onsite, the opportunity has been taken to address some maintenance items which it has been expedient to deal with during the course of the contract. It is estimated that the maintenance element amounts to £63,000 and this is included in the figures. As Members will be aware, maintenance and repair of an historic building is an ongoing task and will need to continue to be budgeted for in future years with an increased budget.
7. The Project has been a challenging one in many ways. As the Project has progressed scope has increased greatly, in some cases through choice of the Council but in others due to necessity as issues arise as works progress in an old building. Estimates are made at the start of a project but you cannot be sure until works commence as to the outcomes and even at this stage there will be new problems and issues emerging. However the site is due to be handed back to the Council in October 2018.
8. Members will be aware but it is worth detailing here the procedural way in which contract variations are dealt with. No contingency was provided for within the contract itself, meaning that additional expenditure cannot be authorised by the contractor. Variations are issued by the contract administrator. Note as a separate matter there is a contingency in the overall Project. Leys Longden Chartered Surveyors act as the surveyors, contract administrators and project managers. In this role they scrutinise costs as the project progresses and issue necessary variations, having frequent and continuous contact with the Town Clerk in this regard. Leys Longden also report back to the Guildhall Development Working Group. The Working Group has considered the major variations within the scope of the Project, for instance fire alarms and detection. Variations which involve a major change to the approved plans and scope, for instance the “Space to Change” WC, are approved by the Council. The Council has also retained Peter Turvey, Quantity Surveyor PT Projects, who provided advice on the original contract costs and has also given advice regarding the price of major variations. This has given considerable assurance in relation to value for money.
9. The contract sum will likely increase before completion, the major variation now being in relation to the installation of an improved emergency lighting system across the Guildhall suite of buildings.

**The Committee is requested to approve the financial update in relation to the building project/ contract with Inside Out and endorse all related variations in the project to date.**

## **Guildhall Projects – budget estimates update**

10. Please find attached the latest financial projections for the overall Guildhall Project. Unlike the contract update detailed above, the budget estimates update comprises a projection based on both actual/ committed expenditure as well as estimates in relation to anticipated but not committed expenditure and this is indicated in the column headed “status.” Do not try to reconcile the contract financial update report with this document as they are prepared on different bases, but note that all the anticipated contract expenditure is included in this estimates document. Fees are included in the budget estimates whereas they are not in relation to the contract update. Note also that the fire alarm and detection works in relation to the Abbey Hall and Roysse Court are apportioned to other budgets which sit under Finance and General Purposes Committee.

### Expenditure

11. The left-hand side of the table shows the expenditure estimates for September 2018, with the comparison column being December 2017, when the main building contract sum was approved. This shows a decrease in overall project expenditure from £1,294,980 to £1,257,816.

Major elements of change are:

- a. Main building works – increase by £49,824 to £567,304. The reasons for these increases have been considered in relation to the main contract.
- b. Improvements to commercial kitchen. The original estimate assumed essential works only but it is now considered, with the kitchen being used by both the Guildhall and the Regal cinema, that all works should be undertaken to enable the kitchen to operate to serve the building in an effective manner, and this has included some building adaptations. The current estimate is £99,165 (increase from £50,000 in December 2017). Note that the current estimate shown is pre-tender; tenders have been received and are being evaluated prior to a contract, so this figure will change.
- c. Works to Old Magistrates Court. This is a major area of change. It was previously resolved:
  - a. *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.*
  - b. *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.*

In relation to the proposals that the Old Magistrates' Court to be used for Museum exhibition and storage we are now 12 years on from the commencement of the County Hall Museum Improvement and Access Project. Consideration should perhaps be given to reviewing access to the County Hall itself. It should be remembered that the proposed HLF funded lift to the Sessions Hall was only blocked late in the planning process by the English Heritage Advisory Committee, a national committee considering applications of national significance. The lift was supported not only by HLF but also the Vale's Conservation Officer and English Heritage Regional Office and since the planning approval in 2009 the balance between conservation and accessibility has moved. I would suggest that this requires fuller consideration when this part of the Guildhall Project has been completed.

The estimates make allowance for this work together with the "Space for Change."

The overall impact of the above changes is to reduce the budget allocation in relation to the Old Magistrates Court from £250,000 to £86,890.

12. The proposed installation of the lift and rebuilding of staircase in the Guildhall remain in the estimates at £240,000 with £160,000 funded from the Capital Improvement Sum and £80,000 allocated to revenue from 2019/2020 onwards.

*In May 2018 it was agreed 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."*

Having due regard to current workloads in relation to the Guildhall and Abbey Hall (cinema) projects it is now advised that this work should be re-scheduled for December 2018 and the Committee is requested to agree this.

#### Other matters to note

13. WiFi – there is currently no additional capacity for super-fast broadband through fibre in the town centre BT cabinets 14 and 54 and it is understood that there are no current plans to upgrade these cabinets. Without super-fast broadband the operation the WiFi will be seriously impeded and potential solutions are being looked at.
14. Furniture and equipment – new lighter (but sturdy) tables will be sourced for the Roysse Room and the Council Chamber. It is intended to source the AV equipment following discussions with the Regal, who have been awarded the

contract for the management and operation of the Guildhall (see agenda item 8).

15. Heating system – controls in relation to radiators have been replaced meaning that heating in the rooms will be easier to control. As previously agreed the current heating system remains in place and will remain regularly serviced and maintained.

#### Funding

16. The right-hand columns show the source for the funding of the expenditure. The bulk of the funding is allocated from the Vale of White Horse DC deferred grant, amounting to £1,018,660 of the £1,019,486 remaining. It should be noted that of this figure the £160,000 allocated to the lift/ staircase will not be incurred during 2018/19. Revenue funding from earmarked reserves is projected to be £159,153, this covering both revenue items included in the project and some capital items. This is an increase on the £100,494 allocated in December 2017. Note that the pooled property reserve at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018 was £299,561.

**The Committee is requested to approve the budget estimates update in relation to the Guildhall Project, including the transfers between the budget lines as reported.**

Nigel Warner  
Town Clerk  
11<sup>th</sup> September 2018.

**Financial update on Guildhall building project/ contract with Inside Out**

	<b>Jun-18</b>	<b>Sep-18</b>
	£	£
<b>Contract, as let (no contingency allowed for within this sum)</b>	<b>400,727</b>	<b>400,727</b>
 <b><u>Guildhall - historic rooms - additional items/variatio</u></b>		
Toilets, changes from queries in ground	2,000	6,000
Toilets, structure above ground	7,000	7,000
Toilets and tea station, internal changes	9,000	12,000
Damp to boiler room and kitchen	10,000	11,000
Additional work in relation to Roysse Court paving	21,000	26,000
Building regulations requirements	16,000	16,500
High level roof and general maintenance	27,000	20,000
Internal decoration	15,000	16,500
Additional reception works	0	4,500
Loft to Roysse Room	0	5,000
	inc.	
Removal of deleterious materials	elsewhere	20,000
Outside wall of Roysse Room	0	3,500
General internal maintenance works	0	500
Kitchen building adaptations	0	2,000
Fire alarm and detection	0	29,429
	<b>107,000</b>	<b>179,929</b>
 <b><u>Abbey Hall costs additional to contract</u></b>		
Removal of the ramp	20,000	20,000
Fire alarm and detection	0	48,408
	<b>20,000</b>	<b>68,408</b>
 <b><u>Old Magistrates Court costs additional to contract</u></b>		
Old Magistrates Court	5,500	12,000
Space for Change	43,000	40,000
Fire alarm and detection	0	5,852
	<b>48,500</b>	<b>57,852</b>
 <b><u>Roysse Court costs - additional to contract</u></b>		
Fire alarm and detection	<b>0</b>	<b>15,164</b>
 <b>Total (excluding fees @ 10%)</b>	 <b>576,227</b>	 <b>722,080</b>