

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

**Draft Minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on Monday 29th February 2016
in the Roysse Room, Guildhall, Abingdon-on-Thames.**

Present:

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| CLlr Dennis Garrett | Chairman of Guildhall Committee |
| CLlr Mike Badcock | Vice-Chairman of Guildhall Committee |
| CLlr Samantha Bowring | |
| CLlr Neil Fawcett | |
| CLlr Brian Hedley | |
| CLlr Jan Morter | |
| CLlr Robert Hall | |

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| CLlr Sandy Lovatt | Ex-Officio Chairman of Finance and General Purposes Committee |
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In Attendance

CLlr Vicky Jenkins

| | |
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| David Boyd | Lewandowski Architects |
| Dan Lewandowski | Lewandowski Architects |

2 Members of the public

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| Ms Heather Brown | Community Services Officer (Clerk to the meeting) |
| Mr Steve Rich | Assistant Town Clerk/ Head of Services |
| Mr Nigel Warner | Town Clerk |

G34 **Apologies for Absence**

There were apologies for absence from the Mayor, CLlr Helen Pighills.

G35 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received at the meeting.

G36 **Minutes**

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

Resolved: that, subject to minor amendments proposed by Cllr Vicky Jenkins, the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 15th December 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

G37 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising from the previous meeting which were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

G38 **Public Participation**

Mr Philip Kenrick made a statement covering two points, as follows:

1. **The post-refurbishment business plan (27 January 2016)**

Under section 4 ('The Multi-use vision') at section 4d, the last bullet-point lists 'Vintage Fair, Arts and Crafts Fairs, Antiques Fairs'.

No further mention is made of events of this kind, and no related income is listed under section 6.6 ('Income from *Good Times at the Guildhall*').

I invite the Committee to note that, in the past, the lack of adequate parking for delivery/removal of heavy or bulky objects such as display stands, furniture etc. has been a serious disincentive to hirers considering venues for such events, and that no provision in this regard has been listed in section 5 ('What is needed to deliver the vision?'). If there is a real wish to promote such use, this is a matter which will require further thought.

2. **The current plans for the Abbey Hall**

I note that the current drawings (and indeed, the immediately preceding ones) indicate that the glazing of the main hall should be replaced by 'triple-glazed openable windows.' I ask the Committee to consider non-opening windows in these positions. If I am correct in understanding that the hall will have air-conditioning/temperature control, this will be frustrated by open windows. On the other hand, it is most likely that the temperature will rise to the point that users wish to open the windows ONLY on those occasions (concerts or dances) when it is particularly important not to open them in order to retain adequate sound insulation.

The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Dennis Garrett, thanked Mr Kendrick for the points he had made. Ms Heather Brown, Community Services Officer, was requested to provide further details about the Post Refurbishment Business Plan; she noted that the question was welcome and demonstrated the intelligent interest of the public participant, and explained that the "Good Times at the Guildhall" income line included any vintage or craft fairs as well as may other types of event such as concerts, dances and cinema screenings, and that a total of 50 various events had been budgeted in the first year with an average ticket price of £8 per person. The finer detail beneath this had not yet been confirmed but in her thinking she had assumed that possibly 2 or 3 of the 50 events might be specifically this type of exhibitor fair. She did not disagree that the limited vehicle space outside could be a challenge for any event where a large number of vehicles need to unload in a short time and confirmed that in any event management plan there would be staffing for management of the outside spaces so

that traffic would be managed with a view to keeping the access routes down Abbey Close unblocked.

The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Dennis Garrett, requested that the representatives from Lewandowski Architects provide further detail to point 2 from the public participant. Their statement confirmed that the plans would be relabelled so that it was clear the windows would not be openable as there was no intention to provide openable windows. Cllr Vicky Jenkins queried how the room would be ventilated if the ventilation system breaks down and it was confirmed that the building would be managed on the basis that all systems would receive speedy engineer support in the event of a breakdown.

Dr Jim Halliday had provided a statement to the meeting as follows:

I looked at the revised plans with considerable interest and am pleased to see that many of my earlier concerns have been addressed by the changes to the design. May I suggest one further small change which you might wish to consider - it occurs to me that the former bar area on the second floor which is now to be converted into a storage area might make a very good muniment room - it already has a modern stable floor, and would enable the records to be examined by the archivist's visitors in the glazed seating area : indeed perhaps the wall between the document store and the seating area could house display cases to highlight some of the non-light sensitive records.

Cllr Neil Fawcett explained that this had been considered but cost considerations had prevented this idea being taken any further. Officers confirmed that glazing was a very expensive item.

G39 **Guildhall Development Project – Report of the Town Clerk**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk as circulated with the agenda.

Report Item 1: Finalisation of plans with a view to applying for planning permission

The Town Clerk requested the representatives from the architects to present the plans to the committee.

By way of an introduction to the presentation, Mr Lewandowski noted that they had received encouragement from the planner with whom they had been in contact at the Vale of White Horse District Council to the effect that they should proceed straightaway to make a formal application rather than use any kind of pre-planning process.

Lewandowski Architects presented recent revisions to the plans for the refurbishment of the Guildhall buildings. These included:

- a. That there had been a review of the plans for the central area in the light of input from members of the public and councillors, and that some improvements had been drawn into the plans which did not have major financial implications as they mainly

involved the rearrangement of simple block walls, and no particularly expensive materials.

- b. The stair ascending from the doors of the Roysse Room would be removed and this had been a huge gain in terms of improving the options for the space as this stair was over-large for the space and formed a massive overhanging presence as guests exit the Roysse Room. In this space there would instead be a useful and spacious adjunct area that could house a bar or display tables if there was an event which needed to “spill out” from the Roysse Room as well as the added benefit of being able to build into the existing undercroft store a small bar servery.
- c. The Abbey Hall would benefit from a wider main access staircase in the corner of the building.
- d. The stairs rising from the present foyer area to the Abbey Hall would be partially given over to a platform lift providing good disabled access within the building.
- e. At the entrance into the Abbey Hall from the centre of the building there would be a space that could be green room, cloak room or instrument store or even house a temporary bar.
- f. The existing bar area would be used as storage or office space, or could be an exhibition area.
- g. There would be two openings out onto outdoor terraces at the front and back of the building. As the front entrance steps would be removed there is the possibility of accommodating another platform lift.
- h. Subject to overcoming the floor level changes there was an opportunity to provide a door from the main café/foyer area to the kitchen by knocking through the rooms/cupboards which presently lie at the far end of the kitchen. This had been particularly welcomed by the working group which had been concerned about convenience of access to the kitchen from that area and felt it could have made it hard to cater some events efficiently. It also provided increased options with regard to the type of food that could be served in the café day to day. The existing floor level differences could be addressed at detailed design stage.

Cllr Mike Badcock proposed and Cllr Neil Fawcett seconded and it **was resolved** to approve amended plans in relation to the Guildhall Development Project and agreed that these be submitted for planning permission, subject to a delegation to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Guildhall Development Working Group to authorise any minor changes to the application before the application is submitted or during its consideration by the District Council. Architects confirmed that they had requested to know the amount of the planning application fee so that they could advise the Town Clerk as to the cheque to be raised.

Cllr Neil Fawcett pointed out that the recent revisions had provided considerable increases in functionality and that the working group were satisfied from discussions with the architects that the extra items would not push up the project cost unacceptably. It **was resolved** the Council should now proceed with the full plans (as amended) through to tender stage at which point the Council would have actual figures and could then make a fully informed decision on how it proceeds and any value engineering, re-scoping or additional funding required.

Report Item 2: Updated cost plan and project plan

Cllr Vicky Jenkins asked about the age of the boilers and the Town Clerk advised that, as mentioned in his report, he would be able to bring back a detailed report about the boilers at the next meeting as he had now received back the information he needed from the heating engineers who had been commissioned to look into the state of the boilers and provide an opinion on whether they had to be replaced. He was hopeful that subject to the answers to some further queries he would be able to confirm that they would not need to be replaced at this stage.

The Town Clerk's report asked members to recommend the Guildhall Development Project budget based on the figures given in the meeting of 15th December 2015. Cllr Dennis Garrett proposed and Cllr Neil Fawcett seconded and it was recommended to the Town Council through the Finance and General Purposes Committee, that the capital budget for the Guildhall Development Project be set at £2,184,000, this sum to be incurred over the two years 2016/17 and 2017/18 and financed as follows: deferred grant £1,019,000; loan up to £1,000,000; balance remaining to be funded from revenue budgets in relation to property and the Guildhall.

Report Item 3: Business Plan

The Post-Refurbishment Business Planning Report published on 27th January 2016 was discussed by the committee. Cllr Dennis Garrett felt that the overall honesty and robustness of the document was a solid basis for moving forward. Cllr Neil Fawcett said that it was fully accepted by the working group that details will change and that therefore the income and expenditure lines would be subject to change as more details emerged from the building plans and there was more discussion and more refinement of the proposed business activities to be carried out in the building.

Cllr Sandy Lovatt agreed that it was a good baseline and that it could have more detail added to it as the spreadsheets upon which it was based would allow constant updating of the assumptions and the figures involved.

Report Item 4: Consultation

The Town Clerk's report suggested that more consultation should now be done as the plans were now available in more detail and statutory consultation would occur due to the planning application. **It was resolved** that the working group be delegated to organise appropriate consultation on the plans and the project as it now stands.

Report Item 5: Decant of the new building

The Town Clerk's report suggested that the working group oversee a plan to remove the remaining objects and equipment in the new building, as the archives will be moved to their temporary storage at the Berkshire County Archive in April 2016. A mixture of disposal, storage, donation and resale might be necessary to maximise the asset value and the

working group will need to make detailed decisions on the inventory piece by piece. It was agreed to delegate these decisions to the working group.

Cllr Vicky Jenkins asked about a plaque which she understood to be in the Guildhall. The Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk stated that they had no knowledge of the item.

Cllr Sandy Lovatt asked that the Guildhall Committee resolve the matter of which committee should be responsible for submitting the plans for planning permission and it was advised that this matter should stay with the Guildhall Committee.

G40 **Financial Report**

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

It was moved by the Chairman, Cllr Dennis Garrett and seconded by the Vice Chairman, Cllr Michael Badcock that the management accounts be approved. This was **resolved** unanimously.

G41 **Calendar of Meetings for 2016/17**

It was noted that the draft calendar of meetings would be considered by the Council at its meeting in March 2016. It was agreed that 12th May 2016 may be suggested as an alternative date for the next meeting.

G42 **Exclusion of the Public Including the Press**

The Chairman thanked the public attendees for their interest in the project. He then 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.

Note on confidentiality: it should be appreciated that it is challenging, when considering the potential building works going forward, to retain a balance between what should be included in the open minutes and what needs to be recorded in confidential session. Rather than retain the record of all discussions in confidential session, a view has been taken, in the interests of transparency, to include as much as possible in the public domain and where possible minutes will be published which contain detail of the confidential discussions.

Members of the public and press left the meeting at this point, as well as the representatives from Lewandowski Architects.

Cllr Brian Hedley arrived at the meeting, it being 7.45pm

G43 **Confidential appendix of previous meeting**

The Committee received and considered the confidential appendix of the meeting of 15th December 2015.

Resolved: that the confidential appendix of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 15th December 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

G44 **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising from the reading of the confidential appendix to the minutes.

G45 **Guildhall Development Project**

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

The meeting rose at 8.20pm.

DRAFT