

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Draft Minutes of the Guildhall Committee, held on Thursday 23rd March at 7.00pm in the Meeting Room, Roysse Court, Abingdon-on-Thames.

Present:

Cllr Dennis Garrett	Chairman
Cllr Mike Badcock	Vice-Chairman
Cllr Samantha Bowring	
Cllr Robert Hall	
Cllr Brian Hedley	
Cllr Jan Morter	

In Attendance

Cllr Margaret Crick
Cllr Vicky Jenkins

Mrs Jane Bowen	
Mr Jonathan Longden	Leys Longden Architects
Mr Steve Rich	Head of Services/Assistant Town Clerk
Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk - Clerk to the meeting

One member of the public.

G39 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Alice Badcock (ex-officio, Mayor) and Cllr Neil Fawcett.

G40 **Declarations of interest**

None.

G41 **Minutes**

Members received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee of 13th December 2016.

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee of 13th December 2016 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

G42 **Matters arising**

None.

G43 **Public participation**

No statements or questions from those present.

G44 **Finance Report**

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

Resolved: that the report be approved.

G45 **Guildhall Development Project**

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

The Town Clerk spoke to his report. He reminded Members that in September 2016 the Council received a report from Mrs Jane Bowen in relation to future use of rooms in the Guildhall including the display of treasures, provision of muniment room and museum displays/ storage. In October 2016 the Council commissioned further work in relation to this project. This work ran in parallel to the project in relation to the Abbey Hall.

In February 2017 members received a briefing from Mrs Jane Bowen, together with Mr Jonathan Longden of Leys Longden and Co, in relation to the future use of the rooms in the historic Guildhall building. At this briefing Mrs Bowen and Mr Longden presented their findings and proposals. The architectural proposals are now brought forward for formal consideration by this Committee.

The architect, Mr Jonathan Longden of Leys Longden, took the Committee through the architectural proposals in relation to the historic Guildhall. Copies of the plans had been circulated and were also displayed on a screen.

Access improvements

Mr Longden outlined a proposal to remove the existing staircase of the Guildhall and rebuild it around a lift to be located in the centre of the stairwell. This would provide disabled access to the Bear Room, Mayor's Parlour, Council Chamber, the Abbey Room and the top floor toilets. He stated that as part of the rebuilding the height of the balustrade would be increased to meet current standards, as the height, at 750mm, was currently too low.

It would be necessary to have very detailed and potentially lengthy discussions with the District Council's Conservation Officer as well as Historic England because of the impact of the proposals upon the existing staircase.

Proposed link / toilet extension to the rear of the Guildhall (behind Roysse Room) to assist disabled access and provide proper toilet facilities.

Mr Longden outlined the proposal that an extension be built to the Guildhall which would provide for a disabled WC and also ladies and gents toilets at ground floor level. This would mean that the correct number of toilet would then be available within the Guildhall allowing all the rooms to be used at the same time. The extension would be behind the south end of the Roysse Room and the Roysse Court office. The proposed extension would also provide for a new muniment room.

An important part of the proposals was to provide a link between the Guildhall and Roysse Court, the corridor going from the lobby area to the Roysse Room through the west side of the commercial kitchen along a new corridor from which the toilets and muniment room would be accessed.

Members welcomed the proposals. In discussing the detail the following points were made:

- Consideration should be given to provision of gender neutral toilets;
- A query was raised regarding the extension roof and whether it would be a flat roof, which the Member did not favour. Mr Longden stated that the proposals would provide for a pitched roof.

The Chairman Cllr Dennis Garrett reminded the Committee that there were many points of detail which would need to be considered throughout the process and therefore the Guildhall Development Working Group would need to be reconvened to consider matters on a regular basis so as to give appropriate guidance to the architect.

It was proposed by Cllr Mike Badcock, seconded by Cllr Robert Hall and **recommended to the Finance and General Purposes Committee:**

1. To instruct the architect to enter into detailed discussion and negotiations with the District Council and Historic England in relation to the proposals for the staircase / lift and report back to this Committee at its next meeting.
2. To instruct the architect to undertake further work in relation to the proposals for (i) the refurbishment of the Guildhall reception to improve disabled access and the provision of disabled access from reception to the Old Magistrates Court and (ii) for the extension to the Guildhall (as detailed above) and to, on behalf of the Town Council, make an application for planning permission and listed building consent to undertake this work. In relation to this part of the project it is noted that part of the pre-planning application advice which was currently ongoing, there may need to be alterations to these plans and consequently it was further recommended that authorisation for change to details, whilst retaining the broad principles

as presented to this Committee this evening, be delegated to the Guildhall Development Working Group.

Other matters which needed to be addressed

The Committee noted the other matters which needed to be addressed within the Guildhall.

In relation to the Roysse Court gardens it was noted that provision had already been made within the budget for necessary improvements. There was an option to combine this work with the other building work. However it was considered that this work was now becoming more urgent and the Committee **resolved** that the Council now proceed with this work, noting the existing delegations in relation to the project.

Funding of the Guildhall Development Project

A Member stated that before agreeing the budget she would wish to receive a detailed breakdown to the estimated costs in relation to the different projects. The Town Clerk stated that the Council was not as yet in a position to provide all of these figures but that there was a proposal coming forward in this regard.

It was proposed by Cllr Dennis Garrett, seconded by Cllr Brian Hedley and **recommended to the Finance and General Purposes Committee** by 4 votes in favour and 2 abstentions that the capital budget for the Guildhall Development Project be set at £1,019,486, this sum to be incurred over the two financial years 2017/18 and 2018/19 and financed from the deferred grant from the Vale of White Horse District Council.

It was **resolved** (unanimously) that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to instruct the council's quantity surveyor to produce detailed costings of the project as the plans are further developed.

Timetable

The draft timetable was noted and would be considered again at the next meeting.

G46 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 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.

G47 **Confidential appendix**

The Committee received and considered the confidential appendix to the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee of 13th December 2016.

Resolved: that the confidential appendix to the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee of 13th December 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

G48 **Matters arising**

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

G49 **Guildhall Development Project**

It was noted that estimates for individual projects were commercially sensitive at this stage, prior to quotations/ tenders being obtained. Further estimates in relation to the potential costs of the various aspects of the Project were discussed. See also confidential appendix.

It was proposed by Cllr Dennis Garrett, seconded by Cllr Mike Badcock and **recommended to the Finance and General Purposes Committee** (unanimously) that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Guildhall Development Working Group to incur expenditure of up to £25,000, in addition to the £10,000 already allocated, towards the costs of the project, including necessary professional surveys and fees, from the budget recommended above (£1,019,486).

The meeting rose at 8.10 pm.