

**Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council**  
**Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held at 7.00 pm**  
**on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2015**  
**In the Roysse Room, Guildhall, Abingdon-on-Thames.**

**Present**

Cllr Sandy Lovatt	Chairman
Cllr Michael Badcock	Vice-Chairman and Chairman of Planning, Highways & Consultations Committee
Cllr Alice Badcock	Chairman of Amenities and Recreation Committee
Cllr Samantha Bowring	
Cllr Dennis Garrett	Chairman of Guildhall Committee
Cllr Vicky Jenkins	
Cllr Monica Lovatt	Chairman of CH Museum Management Committee
Cllr Patrick Lonergan	
Cllr David Pope	
Cllr Andrew Todd	Chairman of Community Services Committee

**In Attendance**

Cllr Angela Lawrence	
Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk (Clerk to the meeting)
Mrs Susan Whipp	Treasurer

**SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)**

F1 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from the Mayor, Cllr Helen Pighills.

F2 **Declarations of interest**

None.

F3 **Minutes**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015.

The following changes were agreed:

- Page 6: paragraph a) changed from 1 April 2014 to 1 April 2015
- Page 7: "comprised of" corrected to "comprised"

**Resolved:** that subject to the corrections, the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

F4 **Matters Arising**

F74 - Regarding the Blue Plaque Scheme, a further name (James Cobban) was put forward for consideration.

**Resolved:** to forward the name James Cobban to the Blue Plaques Board.

F74 – Plans for a Bun Throwing ceremony in 2016 is referred to a future meeting of this Committee.

F75 - A member of the committee asked why there was no separate budget for the Craft Fair. The Town Clerk replied that very little staff resource is taken up on the craft fair and it is essentially self-financing and so it does not warrant a separate budget.

F75 – A concern was expressed regarding the quality of the new French Market which took place in April 2015. However, whilst this market had been referred to in the previous minutes was now under the Terms of the Reference of the Community Services Committee and consequently the matter was referred to that committee.

F84 – A member of the committee asked if any of the contingency set aside by the Council had been drawn down by the ChAPs Board. The Town Clerk explained the circumstances in which this contingency may be required, in relation to the BID (Business Improvement District) ballot, and consequently it had not been drawn on at this stage.

F5 **Statements and Questions from the Public**

There were no statements or questions from the Public.

F6 **Appointment of Sub-Committees**

Nominations were put forward for the Personnel Sub-Committee and it was

**Resolved** that:

- (i) the following members be appointed to the Personnel Sub-Committee:  
Cllr Mike Badcock Chairman  
Cllr Samantha Bowring  
Cllr Robert Hall  
Cllr Angela Lawrence  
Cllr Patrick Lonergan

- (ii) that authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to draft Terms of Reference for this Sub-Committee.

#### F7 **Choose Abingdon Partnership (ChAPs)**

The Committee received a verbal report from the Town Clerk. To assist newly elected members, the Chairman gave a brief history of ChAPs and the BID referendum in the autumn 2015.

It was noted that at the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2014, the committee had recommended that the Council vote in favour of the BID and that a delegation be granted to the Town Clerk to cast this vote on behalf of the Council. This was approved by the Full Council on 17<sup>th</sup> September 2015. However, as a new Council had been elected since then it was **agreed** that the final BID proposal be revisited once the details are known and the decision reviewed at that point.

**Resolved:** that the Council should consider the final BID proposal once the details are available and then decide on whether it should cast its vote in favour of the BID at that point.

#### F8 **Financial Report**

The Committee received and considered the report of Treasurer.

With reference to the payment listings in Appendix A of the report, a member queried the expenditure on the website phase 2 project as she believed the project had not been fully delivered. It was **agreed** this would be referred back to the Community Services Committee to investigate. A member asked where Museum storage would be shown within the management accounts. The Town Clerk replied it was covered under agency agreements in cost centre 101.

It was suggested that more payments could be made electronically. The Town Clerk and Treasurer explained that the current process of using cheques which require two members to sign provides the Council with a robust internal control and they would be hesitant to lose that control. However they agreed to investigate options and bring to a future meeting.

The Management Accounts attached to the report at Appendices B and C were discussed, with one member asking about the use of earmarked reserves. The Town Clerk explained that usually movements in and out of these reserves were carried out at budget setting time and at year end.

Another member asked for clarification over the impact of council tax debts on the town council's income. The Treasurer explained that the Councils' precept is paid in two instalments and is not affected by the actual amount of council tax collected from Abingdon residents by the District Council.

It was noted that the 2015-16 budget shown in Appendices B and C included the council tax reduction scheme grant of £59,772. This was a reduction of £19,691 compared with the previous year and was due to reduce further in subsequent years. The Council would need to plan ahead to cover this shortfall in funding.

The Treasurer explained the need to update the list of signatories on the bank mandate. The Bank Mandate should be updated so that new members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee be appointed as cheque signatories. If it was in agreement the Committee was required to pass a formal resolution as worded by the bank.

It was **resolved** that the Bank should continue to operate accounts in the name of the Council and that:

- (i) the bank should pay cheques or accept other written instructions to make payments by any means (including electronically) from any of the Council's accounts, even if this causes an overdraft or increases an existing overdraft.
- (ii) For all other purposes (without being in any way limited by paragraph (i) above), the bank may treat any written instruction, agreement or undertaking of any nature as duly given by and binding on the Council when signed by any two Councillors from list A (Members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee) and any one officer from List B (Town Clerk or Treasurer).
- (iii) The signatories who sign in accordance with the signing instructions above may agree and sign on the Council's behalf, any agreement or document necessary for the provision of banking services involving the giving of instructions by the Council to the Bank or the giving of information by the Bank to the Council by electronic or similar means.
- (iv) These resolutions and the Council's mandate to the Council be completed and given to the bank, to remain in force until the bank are advised in writing to the contrary (which includes any revocation of this mandate) when signed by any two authorised signatories, as named in the Authorised Signatory Sheet(s).
- (v) The Authorised Signatory Sheet(s) be completed and given to the bank.

The Internal Audit report attached at Appendix D was noted and the Chairman thanked the Town Clerk and the Treasurer for their work in receiving such a positive report.

**Resolved:** that:

- (i) the report of the Treasurer dated 11<sup>th</sup> June 2015 be adopted.
- (ii) All members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, and Cllr Angela Lawrence, be signatories for the purposes of the bank mandate.

F9 **Dates of meetings 2015/16**

Members noted the dates of the meetings of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for 2015/16:

- 15<sup>th</sup> September;
- 15<sup>th</sup> December;
- 12<sup>th</sup> January 2016 (Budget);
- 8<sup>th</sup> March.

F10 **Publicity**

It was **agreed** that a press release on the recommendations in relation to the Guildhall project would be made following the Council meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2015, at which time the Council's decisions would be released into the public domain.

**SECTION II (Excluding the public and the press)**

F11 **Exclusion of the public, including the press**

**Resolved that** the Chairman move:

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.

F12 **Confidential Appendix**

The confidential appendix to the minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015 were considered.

**Resolved:** that the confidential appendix of the meeting of 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015 be approved as a correct record.

F13 **Matters Arising**

F82 - Cllr Monica Lovatt, Chairman of the CH Museum Management Committee, gave a verbal update on the running of the museum café, which is now being run in-house with the support of volunteers, and confirmed that the Community and Visitor Information Centre would be moving to the Museum basement from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015.

F14 **Matters referred from other committees**

**Guildhall Committee of 11<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

The Confidential Report of the Town Clerk was received and considered.

**Resolved:** that the confidential report of the Town Clerk be approved, subject to the recommendations detailed in the confidential appendix. It was noted that for reasons of commercial sensitivity all matters were currently being considered in the confidential session but that following consideration of the recommendations, the Council's decisions would be released in to the public domain.

F15 **Service Reviews**

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

Regarding the review of The Use of Information Technology and Recommendations for improvement, it was noted that the Council's assets including IT systems were the responsibility of Finance and General Purposes Committee. However, there was some overlap with communications, which were within the Terms of Reference of the Community Services Committee. Therefore the findings of this review were referred to the Community Services Committee for consideration.

The Committee noted that the review schedule for the next two years was as follows:

2015: the Guildhall, Community and Civic Services.

2016: Town environment, democratic representation.

A review of Planning, following the adoption of the Local Plan.

**Resolved:**

- (i) that the Property Maintenance Review be approved, subject to the resolution in the confidential appendix.
- (ii) that the Report into the use of Information Technology and Recommendations for improvement be fully considered by the

Community Services Committee and reported back to Finance and General Purposes Committee.

- (iii) That authority be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of this committee to source the 2015 reviews from Chris Rolley Associates from within the budget agreed to source this work, with a view to this work taking place over the summer months.

## F16 **Property Matters**

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

### Cemetery buildings project:

It was noted that tenders had now been received and it was proposed by Cllr Patrick Lonergan, seconded by Cllr Michael Badcock and **resolved** that the tender from EG Carter and Co Ltd be accepted and authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to instruct the council's surveyors, Knight Frank, to commission this work; that the cemetery buildings improvements are funded as detailed above.

### Mayor's robe:

The current condition of the Mayor's robe was discussed. This robe was made in 1956 and has had many repairs and alterations since then. It was felt that it was now in need of replacement.

A Member stated that the Council should procure three quotes for this work. The Chairman, Cllr Sandy Lovatt, stated that a reasonable price had been quoted by a dressmaker whose work was known and trusted to the Council, and that quotes were not necessary in this case.

It was proposed by Cllr Sandy Lovatt, seconded by Cllr Monica Lovatt and **resolved** (by 9 votes in favour and 1 against) that the Council commission a new robe with faux (fake) fur, using the local dressmaker Florence at a cost of up to £750.

**Resolved:** that the confidential report of the Town Clerk be approved, subject also to the resolution detailed in the confidential appendix.

## F106 **Residents' Parking Scheme**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk outlined his negotiations with Oxfordshire County Council regarding the agency agreement and should hear back shortly.

**Resolved:** that the confidential report of the Town Clerk be approved, subject to the resolution in the confidential appendix.

F107 **Staffing**

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

It was proposed by Cllr Michael Badcock, seconded by Cllr Monica Lovatt and **Recommended** (by 9 votes in favour with one abstention): that the confidential report of the Town Clerk be approved together with the recommendations contained therein.

The meeting rose at 8:53 pm.