

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Minutes of the Community Services Committee held on Tuesday 8th September 2015 at 7.00 pm in the Roysse Court Meeting Room.

Present:

Cllr Andrew Todd	Chairman
Cllr Alice Badcock	Vice Chairman
Cllr Neil Fawcett	
Cllr Pat Lonergan	
Cllr Monica Lovatt	

In Attendance:

Ms Heather Brown	Community Services Officer (Clerk to the meeting)
Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk

9. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllrs Angela Lawrence and Lorraine Oates.

10. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

11. Minutes

There were two amendments to the minutes of the meeting of 2nd June 2015, being to note the arrival time of Cllr Angela Lawrence within the body of the minutes and to move the name of Cllr Michael Badcock into the In Attendance list as he is not a member of the committee. Subject to these amendments it was **resolved** that authority be delegated to the Chairman will sign the minutes as a correct record when these alterations have been made.

12. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising that were not to be dealt with in the main agenda.

At this stage in the meeting Cllr Neil Fawcett arrived, it being 7.07pm.

13. Grant Applications

Grant applications from two groups were put forward as follows and awards were made.

Grants Applied for under the Community Grants Fund			
Budget for year			£23 550
Total amount previously awarded			£1 600
Total amount remaining in budget			£21 950
Name of Applicant	Reason	Requested	Awarded
My Life My Choice	Monthly self-help group for people in Abingdon (b)	£1600	£1000
Chamber of Commerce	Christmas Extravaganza (a)	£2000	£1000
Totals for this meeting		£3600	£2000
Totals as a percentage of budget		15.3%	8.5%
Amount remaining in budget			£19 950

The above grants were awarded in pursuance of the Council's powers, as noted immediately after the name of the body being awarded the grant, as follows:

- (a) Local Government Act 1972, section 145;
- (b) Local Government Act 1972, section 137;
- (c) Local Government and Rating Act 1997, part III, section 31;
- (d) Local Government Act 1972, section 144;
- (e) Local Government Act 1972, section 142 (2A);
- (f) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, section 19.
- (g) Local Government Act 1972, section 133.

Discussion of My Life, My Choice application: it was noted that only 15 beneficiaries were from Abingdon and that the ratio of grant requested to total project costs was very high but it was also noted that the service provided could be very expensive to run due to the special needs of the service users. The £1000 award (proposed by Cllr Monica Lovatt, seconded by Cllr Patrick Lonergan and agreed by 3 votes in favour to 2 against) reflected these concerns and it was requested that officers remind the group that they can apply again in the new financial year if they have a project more focused on benefit for Abingdon residents.

Discussion of Chamber of Commerce Application: it was noted that the Chamber had co-operated with the Town Council in gradually taking a more leading role in this event and that the Town Council had made a saving this year by handing over the costs of security but that there was still very significant annual investment in the costs of the Christmas lights. The £1000 award (proposed by Cllr Monica Lovatt, seconded by Cllr Alice Badcock and agreed unanimously) was felt to be appropriate this year and it was noted that the Chamber was taking steps to make sure that the event was not reliant on grant funding by selling advertising space in their Christmas brochure and by other means. The matter was referred to again in the discussion about markets.

It was noted that only 8.5% of the grants budget had been committed to date despite this being the sixth month of the financial year, and it was discussed whether an email to community groups encouraging applications should be sent out.

14. Financial Report

Members considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer for the period April to July 2015 and the request to adopt was **agreed** without further discussion.

15. Tourism and other Publications

The report from the Community Services Officer was noted and it was **resolved** that a tourism leaflet should be available for the Information Centre staff to give out to visitors and to distribute elsewhere and that if necessary the Town Council would take the lead on this and budget for the production and design costs. It was further **resolved** that the Vale of White Horse District Council should be contacted with a view to establishing if they would be able to provide an updated version of the previous Abingdon 12 panel DL leaflet. Failing any such commitment the

Town Council should budget to produce a similar leaflet in the financial year 2016-17. The Community Services officer should begin work on this now so that quotes can be considered at the next meeting.

It was **resolved** that two Town Crier magazines will be produced as part of the communications plan for 2016-17 and that the committee would prefer to revert to the A5 format and quality as used in October 2014. Costings for this should be brought to the next meeting.

The imminent publication and distribution of the reprint/update of the Town Guide was noted and it was **resolved** that an updated Town Map would be included in the communications plan for 2016-17 including the cost of distributing this to all households in the town. Costings to be brought to the next meeting.

It was **resolved** that a full year costed plan for using pages in Round and About magazine should once again be presented to the committee at budget time, with arrangements for splitting the costs with other departments worked out in advance by discussion with officers.

16. Councillors L Drive

It was noted that not all councillors had yet tried the L drive access and therefore it was hard to report the extent of problems associated with this. Some councillors had reported gaining access with no issues and others had found differing results depending on which of their devices they had used. It was **resolved** that officers should send out a request to those councillors who have not yet tried the system to ensure that they do before the next meeting and report back.

17. Summer Events Sub-Committee

The notes from the last two meetings of the Summer Events Sub-Committee were reviewed and a brief update was given. The minutes of the August meeting are still in draft and may undergo some alteration at the next meeting. **Resolved:** that subject to the above, the minutes be noted.

18. Other Events

It was **resolved** that a Clubs and Societies Day should be organised in spring 2016 by the Community Services Team.

In previous years the event has been organised without a budget (beyond staff time) which had been possible because the Guildhall was used and no external publicity was paid for. It was noted that the event was of great interest to the community groups and was well attended by them.

It was proposed by Cllr Patrick Lonergan, seconded by Cllr Alice Badcock and **recommended to the Finance and General Purposes Committee** (unanimously) that a Clubs and Societies Day should be organised in spring 2016 and that the Community Services Committee vire up to £1000 from the Community Grants budget for hire of facilities for this event. *(Note £1,000 was believed to be the maximum amount required, the expectation being that it will be less than that).*

Councillors were asked to make any specific requests about Remembrance Day arrangements. It was noted that there are two printed Order of Service documents used on the day, one for use inside the Church, produced by St Helen's Church staff, and a separate one for use at the War Memorial, produced by the Community Services Team. A request was made that large print versions be available to some members of the congregation and officers will take advice from Cllr Monica Lovatt regarding one of these. Officers will look into the possibility of producing some large print versions and will request St Helen's Church to also consider this.

19. Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place on 24th November. The main business of this meeting would be making recommendations in relation to the estimates for 2016/17. It was also requested that there also be a report from the Community Services Officer about digital communications including some website statistics, and a report reviewing community use of the Market Place.

20. Publicity Items

Members approved the use of an article submitted by Thames Water relating to their search for sewage pumps as an item suitable to put on the town website.

21. Exclusion of the public, including the press

The resolution to exclude the public was passed. There were no public or press present in the meeting.

22. Markets Review

The confidential report of the Community Services Officer was received and considered and the following recommendations and resolutions made:

22.1 General Market Strategy

After discussion, the following statement of strategy was proposed by Cllr Patrick Lonergan, seconded by Cllr Alice Badcock and **recommended to the Town Council, through the Finance and General Purposes Committee** (unanimously):

“Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council considers that markets are an opportunity to promote the town, raise its profile and demonstrate its vibrancy, as well as offer local businesses a low-cost way to reach consumers. Therefore this council will create and manage markets with the primary objective being the increase of footfall into the town rather than the raising of income. Previous investment in the infrastructure of the Market Place has been worthwhile as it has created a very appropriate and usable space but this council recognises that ongoing small investments in marketing and promotional activity to increase footfall is also an important part of a sound strategy which will provide economic and social benefit to the whole town.”

22.2 Monday Market

The contents of this section of the report were discussed and it was proposed by Cllr Patrick Lonergan, seconded by Cllr Andrew Todd and **resolved** (unanimously) that the Town Council should continue to work more closely with the Monday market management with a view to improving the look and appeal of the market, increasing permeability and presentation, and promoting the market to target groups. In addition, it was also **recommended to the Finance and General Purposes Committee** that a small percentage of the income received from this source should be reinvested in promoting or improving this market. Community Services Committee would also recommend a sum as part of the annual budgeting process and the Community Services Officer should consult with the traders committee on how this sum should be spent with signage, banners or print being among the range of possible promotional tools as well as free activities like social media. A sum of approximately 3% of income (£600) was agreed to be acceptable to reinvest in the future of this market.

22.3 Thames Valley Farmers' Market

The contents of this section of the report were discussed and it was proposed by Cllr Alice Badcock and seconded by Cllr Neil Fawcett and **resolved** (unanimously) that consultation take place with the Monday market traders, the Chamber of Commerce and the Abingdon Business Alliances regarding a proposal that markets should be created for the first Friday in the month with immediate effect as well as for the third Friday. This would apply for one year from the date of the resolution.

22.4 Local Excellence Market

The contents of this section of the report were discussed and the committee noted that the Chamber of Commerce had recently taken on this project from the Choose Abingdon Partnership which was a testament to the success of the market and the positive regard for it among the town's retailers.

It was proposed by Cllr Andrew Todd, seconded by Cllr Monica Lovatt and **resolved** (unanimously) that markets be created for the following dates:
29th April 2017/ 29th July 2017/ 30th September 2017/ 25th November 2017
(2016 dates were set by F&GP in March 2015.)

It was also proposed by Cllr Neil Fawcett, seconded by Cllr Andrew Todd and **resolved** (unanimously) that the following statement of strategy would guide budget setting for 2016-17:

that the current practice of waiving rent to the Chamber of Commerce for the Local Excellence Markets is continued into the financial year 2016-17, provided that evidence of the use of the market profits for town centre events and schemes of benefit to the community, is submitted annually and provided the Chamber continue to advertise the market so that it brings in footfall.

22.5 Craft Market

It was reported that a Craft Market had already been booked for December 2015 and stallholders have been notified of the date.

Regarding summer 2016, it was noted that officer time will be taken up with preparations for Fun and Music in the Park during late spring and early summer and there were already bookings for events by community groups taking up almost all of the Saturdays in June and July. In August staff holidays meant that staff had to cover each other's workloads. It was also noted that the Craft Market was originally commissioned as part of a drive to provide events in the Market

Place but that it has never had a budget and has suffered from lack of publicity and officer time. It was felt that the enthusiasm of community groups to put on festivals and events is such that there is no need for the Town Council to pump prime in this respect any further as the Market Place is very well used on Saturdays. In fact it may be considered that booking in the Craft Market could now be potentially preventing Market Place use by a community group on a summertime Saturday as some periods are becoming booked out well in advance.

It was proposed by Cllr Monica Lovatt, seconded by Cllr Alice Badcock and **resolved** (unanimously) that no market date be set for a Craft Market in summer 2016 and that officers encourage the Local Excellence Market organisers to provide an alternative outlet for all of the craft stallholders who have been regular attendees of the craft market.

22.6 Continental Markets

The comments in the report on the subject of continental markets were supported by the observations of individual councillors relating to markets in Abingdon-on-Thames and also in other towns.

It was proposed by Cllr Neil Fawcett, seconded by Cllr Alice Badcock and **resolved** (unanimously) that Continental markets will not be included in the market strategy of the Town Council as their benefit to the town is doubtful.

It was noted that specifically a Christmas Market could be treated as an exception to this general policy and any such proposal made to officers should be brought to committee for careful consideration.

22.7 Community Events that also include stalls

The Committee noted that the report highlighted a situation that occurs extremely infrequently but causes unnecessary difficulties and wasted officer time. Occasionally community groups wished to have a few semi-commercial stalls as part of an event and not all of these are permitted under the existing legislation unless a market is declared by the council. Community groups were not aware of the time that is required to agree a market through the meeting cycle of the council. In order to allow for officers to manage this situation efficiently, it was proposed by Cllr Neil Fawcett and seconded by Cllr Alice Badcock and **recommended to the Town Council, via the Finance and General Purposes Committee** that an annual delegation be made to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Community Services Committee to create a maximum of one market in any calendar month so that this delegation

can be used in such situations, this delegation to be exercised where there was not sufficient notice to bring the matter to Committee.

The Community Services Officer was requested to bring forward proposals which would allow fuller delegation to officers in relation to markets, subject to agreed criteria being put in place.

22.8 Town Council rights reserved

It was **resolved** that all market operators and event organisers be informed that the Town Council reserves the right to put up their own stands at any time in the Market Place, without being charged.

The meeting rose at 9.25 pm.