

**Draft Minutes of the Council of the Town of Abingdon-on-Thames held on
Friday 20th March 2020
in the Abbey Hall, Guildhall, Abbey Close, Abingdon**

Present

Cllr Charlie Birks	Mayor
Cllr Cheryl Briggs	Deputy Mayor
Cllr Gabby Barody	
Cllr Samantha Bowring	
Cllr Grace Clifton	
Cllr Eric de la Harpe	
Cllr Neil Fawcett	
Cllr Andy Foulsham	
Cllr Alex Greenaway	

In Attendance

Mr Steve Rich	Assistant Town Clerk / Head of Services
Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk (Clerk to the meeting)
Mrs Susan Whipp	Treasurer/ Responsible Financial Officer

1 member of the public (for part of meeting).

SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)

C94 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Andrew Coveney, Margaret Crick, Jeanette Halliday, Jim Halliday, Patrick Lonergan, Robert Maddison, Lorraine Oates, Helen Pighills, Andrew Skinner and Ulrike Rowbottom.

(Note: due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the requirement for social distancing the Members and Officers had informally agreed that numbers at the meeting be kept to a minimum therefore there were more apologies than normal. In order to assist in social distancing the meeting was held in the Abbey Hall by kind permission of the Abbey Cinema)..

C95 Declarations of Interest

None.

C96 Public participation

On 13 March 2020 Dr Les Clyne had given notice of his intention to make a statement at the Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting which had been due to take place on 17 March 2020. That meeting had been postponed

and therefore the Mayor asked that the Town Clerk read out the statement. A copy of the statement is on file.

(Subsequent to this matter there was a disturbance and Dr Clyne left the meeting).

C97 Coronavirus (COVID19)

The Council received and considered the report of the Town Clerk and the arrangements to be made by the Council during the outbreak of the Coronavirus.

Following discussion it was **resolved:**

Democratic matters

- (a) To temporarily suspend all meetings of the Council and its committees.
- (b) To delegate Council decisions to the Town Clerk during any period of restricted activity declared by the Government in respect of the COVID-19 pandemic, such delegation to enable the Council to fulfil its responsibilities to its residents. That should the Town Clerk become unable to fulfil his role then he delegates this function to another officer who can at that point perform this function, with the ability then to resume his role if or when he is able to.
- (c) In exercising the delegation at (b) and whilst Council and its committees are suspended, that the Town Clerk consult with an Emergency Consultation Panel comprising Cllrs Gabby Barody, Charlie Birks, Samantha Bowring, Cheryl Briggs, Grace Clifton and Jim Halliday.
- (d) That these decisions are documented and regularly reported to Members.
- (e) That should legislation come forward to allow for “virtual meetings” then the Town Clerk, in consultation with the above members, decide to recommence meetings.

Approved absence from Council duties

- (f) That any Member who now does not attend at least one meeting in a six-month period has the requirements of section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 waived and the time limit extended.
- (g) That the matter then be reviewed at the next meeting of the Town Council.

Mayor Making/ Annual meeting of the Council

- (h) That the above meeting, scheduled for 6th May 2020, be cancelled.

Town Council events

- (i) VE Day commemorations (May 2020) and the Fun and Music in the Park (June 2020) be cancelled.

Guildhall

- (j) That the Guildhall be closed temporarily with immediate effect.

Financial

- (k) That for payments of up to £2,500 authority be given to the Town Clerk and Treasurer/ RFO to make these payments electronically.

That for payments over £2,500 approval for payments by given by two members by e-mail. *(Note the previous position was that two members reviewed the invoices in the office).*

Payment listings

- (l) That payment listings are periodically be emailed to all members of the Finance and General Purposes Committee for their approval. (Note the previous position was that all payments require approval by the Finance and General Purposes Committee).

C98 Finance and General Purposes Committee

It was noted that the above meeting had been due to take place on 17th March 2020. Due to the Coronavirus outbreak this meeting was cancelled.

The Town Council considered a number of the items which were detailed on the agenda for that meeting.

Matters referred:

Twinning directional post in Roysse Court Gardens – **agreed** with budget allocated of £5,000.

Other matters noted/ deferred.

Green Advisory & Scrutiny Committee: report noted.

Annual Town (Parish) Meeting:

It was **agreed** that where matters needed to be raised with other authorities, these can be taken forward. An update to be given on the website regarding this matter. Town Clerk to produce an annotated version of his report to serve by way of update. Town Clerk to consult with the Emergency Consultation Panel as necessary.

Financial report:

The schedule of accounts from 1/1/2020 to 29/2/2020 were **approved**.
The Management accounts from 1/4/2019 to 31/1/2020 were **approved**.

Risk register:

Report noted. It was **resolved** that approval be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Panel.

Financial update:

The Internal audit report was **approved**.

With regard to banking/ investment options it was **resolved**:

- (i) The savings currently held with Santander remain in the short term;
- (ii) That authority *be delegated to the Town Clerk* to transfer the sum of £500,000 from the Nat West Business Reserve account to the Public Sector Deposit fund; (note: original recommendation did not include the italicised section).
- (iii) Investing in the Local Authorities' Property Fund is reconsidered once the Council has agreed a longer-term Financial Plan.

Earmarked reserves: no transfers made.

Report from Honorary Archivist

Noted. Thanks of the Council to the Archivist to be conveyed.

Police Community Support Officers

Report noted and consideration deferred.

Neighbourhood Development Plan

Town Clerk referred to e-mail received from Richard Eastham of Fera Urbanism regarding proceeding with the project at this stage digitally only. Council agreed with request for an update every two weeks.

C99 Exclusion of the Public, Including the Press

The Mayor will move:

“That in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted as summarised below.”

C100 Coronavirus (COVID19)

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Town Clerk/ Head of Services, in relation to the cemeteries.

Resolved: that the report be approved, including the recommendations contained therein

C101 Finance and General Purposes Committee

The above meeting was due to take place on 17th March 2020. Due to the Coronavirus outbreak this meeting was cancelled.

The Town Council considered the items which were detailed in the confidential agenda for that meeting. See confidential appendix to these minutes.

The Mayor thanked all those who had attended the meeting and the meeting rose at 9.20pm.