

# Draft Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2018 in St Helen's Church, Abingdon-on-Thames.

## Present

Cllr Jan Morter

Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames and Chairman of the Annual Parish Meeting

Nigel Warner

Town Clerk (Clerk to the meeting)

31 residents of the Parish including Town Councillors and officers.

## 1 General Introduction.

The Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames, Councillor Jan Morter, welcomed all those present to the Annual Parish Meeting. She highlighted that under statute the Parish Meeting was a meeting of the electors of Abingdon organised by the Council each year but was not a Council meeting. Whilst not a legal requirement, it gave the Council the opportunity to inform residents of its work and the progress being made, with the Chairmen of the main committees presenting reports.

The Mayor further outlined the Council's services, how the Council operated and how it made decisions, including its working in partnership with other organisations.

## 2 Minutes of the Parish and Public Meetings

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> May 2017 be agreed as a correct record.

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the Special Parish Meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> January 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

**Resolved:** That the minutes of the Public Meeting which took place on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018 be agreed as a correct record.

For the Special Parish Meeting of 15<sup>th</sup> January 2018 and the Public Meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2018 it was noted that in relation to item 2 (a), the Abbey Hall, where questions were asked or there was a query over the facts, then the Council's response, as approved by the Finance and General Purposes Committee, was shown in italics in the minutes. In relation to item 2 (b), the Guildhall, the Council's draft response, subject to approval by the Guildhall Committee at its meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> March 2018, was shown in italics in the minutes.

## 3 Reports by Committee Chairmen

The Mayor introduced the Chairman of each committee, who then proceeded to give their reports to the meeting.

Members of the public had the opportunity to ask questions of the various Chairmen and were given answers at the meeting.

**(a) Amenities & Recreation Committee**

The Chairman, Cllr Alice Badcock, gave her report to the meeting.

A resident, on behalf of another resident who was unable to attend, stated that she considered that the holding of a Bun Throwing ceremony to commemorate the end of the First World War was inappropriate. She stated that in 1918 the Government had introduced food rationing and those at the time would not have dreamed that the Council would be bun throwing 100 years later. She considered that a more appropriate occasion would have been the wedding of HRH Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. The Town Clerk thanked the resident for her comments. He stated that the holding of the bun throwing was a commemoration of the end of the First World War and that was the Council's resolved position. He was unable to comment on what the Town Council was not organising.

A resident asked what was meant by a matter being "resolved." The Town Clerk stated that this meant that the matter had been debated by the Town Council and the Town Council had taken the decision to take an action, in this case, the organisation of a bun throw to commemorate the end of the First World War.

In response to a query regarding the Ock Valley Bridge, which had been closed following vandalism, the Chairman of the Committee stated that the new bridge was due to be installed shortly.

A resident stated that two years ago he had been told that the Council was saving towards the provision of a new cemetery and had been told that the Town Council was approaching the District Council in this regard. He requested an update. Cllr Alice Badcock responded that negotiations were ongoing with the Vale of White Horse District Council.

**(b) Community Services Committee**

The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Vicky Jenkins, gave her report to the meeting.

A resident stated that the Town Crier magazine had been much appreciated by many residents. Not all residents had access to the internet and the magazine had been particularly appreciated by new residents. He asked that the Town Council reconsidered publishing the Town Crier. A councillor stated that the Town Council continues to publish a comprehensive town guide and a town map, in alternate years. These are delivered to every household in Abingdon. However to publish the Town Crier as had been published previously had significant costs and staffing implications.

The Chairman of the Committee stated that she was aware of some inaccuracies on the town map and that these would be corrected when the new map was published.

**(c) Guildhall Committee**

The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Dennis Garrett, gave his report to the meeting.

There were no questions.

**(d) County Hall Museum Management Committee**

The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Monica Lovatt, gave her report to the meeting,

A resident commented that the newly published museum leaflet did not include information in relation to Abingdon Museum Friends.

**(e) Planning, Highways and Consultations Committee**

The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Margaret Crick, was unable to attend the meeting but a report was given by the Town Clerk.

Cllr Vicky Jenkins referred to the application for a telecoms mast in the Radley Road. It was understood that it was normally permitted development. She was keeping a close eye on this particular application because there was a very short window given for consultation and previously information had not been received by either of the two District Councillors (herself and Cllr Robert Hall) or to the Town Council via the Town Clerk. This had meant that neither of the local District Council members nor the Town Council had the opportunity to put in any comments.

A resident queried how much influence the Town Council had on the planning process.

**(f) Finance and General Purposes Committee**

The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Mike Badcock, was unable to attend the meeting and consequently Cllr Dennis Garrett gave a report to the meeting.

A resident noted the offer from the Regal Cinema, Evesham in relation their proposed use of the Abbey Hall as a cinema and was expecting feedback from the Council in relation to this matter.

A resident queried the timetable in relation to longer term use of the Abbey Hall as part of the One Public Estate programme. In this regard the Town Clerk reported that the County Council was leading on the feasibility work in relation to this matter and this would be taking place over the coming months. Should the project move forward it was anticipated that the design procurement / construction would follow over the next two years. The completion date would depend upon the extent of the works.

The resident asked when effective consultation would take place in relation to this matter.

The Town Clerk stated that through the whole process there would be key break points when the Town Council would need to decide whether to proceed in relation to the involvement of its own properties. Decisions on consultation and how this might take place would be for the Finance and General Purposes Committee to consider as the process develops.

A resident stated that she had a particular interest in communications and publications and posed two questions. Firstly she was delighted that three times as many members of the public were in attendance this evening compared with previous annual parish meetings. However she stated that there had been very little publicity for the meeting. The Town Clerk responded that the meeting had been publicised as it always had

been, the dates were on the website and it had appeared in the local press. The resident also commented that copies of the various reports had not been made available at the meeting.

A resident welcomed the news that the town bus (Route 41) was being reintroduced, funded by the Town Council. She asked that maximum publicity be given to this and requested that the route include Preston Road.

Samantha Bowring, in her role as a trustee of the Carousel Abingdon Children's Centre, gave an update in relation to progress in reopening the Children's Centre. She stated that the Children's Centre was being managed by a community group. She was grateful for the grant which had been received from the Town Council, amounting to £30,000 per year for three years, which would cover core costs and allow the Carousel to apply for other grants. Lease negotiations with Oxfordshire County Council were ongoing and the Children's Centre should have access to the property in the next few weeks. The Carousel was employing a temporary business manager. It was also employing a co-ordinator who was organising the various services which it was hoped would be up and running soon. These would include activities such as the baby clinic and the health visitor. It was anticipated that the Carousel would be working with various other groups to meet needs. It was working with the Citizens' Advice Bureau who would be running an outreach one day a week. Abingdon Carousel were also working with Abingdon Witney College to provide local education classes. The centre would therefore be open some evenings and at other times of the day. Other services were being considered for future development, for example after school day care starting with Thameside and Caldecott.

The Mayor thanked Samantha Bowring for her update.

Following her concluding remarks the Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames, Cllr Jan Morter, thanked all the residents, including councillors, who had attended the meeting.

The meeting rose at 8.37pm