



Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Finance, Governance and Asset Management Committee (FGAM)

Report to the Annual Parish Meeting 2026

Role

Abingdon Town Council funds a number of services and looks after a number of assets on behalf of residents. These include: Eight play areas - Recreation areas - Football pitches - Ock Valley Walk - Old and new cemeteries - The Guildhall complex - The County Hall building in which our Museum is housed - The Market Place and the regular Monday market - Community events - Floral displays - Christmas lights - Street furniture - Communications and funding for community-led support - Other types of grants – support for the town-centre PCSOs and the CCTV system.

Finance

In 2025-26 the town council planned to spend £2,064,136 (net). This was funded by a “Precept” (the money raised via the Council Tax) of £2,064,136, income from fees & charges and rents, and use of “Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)” funds.

An infographic illustrating how the town council spends its council tax income is shown in Appendix A.

The council receives CIL funds from developers of new properties built within the town. Before this year these CIL funds had been used to fund a range of capital projects:

Contributions to the refurbishment of the 30 th Abingdon Scout’s hut, and to a sports area at Carswell School	£12,000
Caldecott Play Equipment Replacement and MUGA	£118,924.60
Solar-powered speed indicator signs	£15,292.43
Resurfacing the Town Council’s part of the Ock Valley Walk	£21,000

This financial year we have spent (or committed to spend) a further £110,00 : £5,000 grant to Abingdon Rugby Club in support of the new ladies changing rooms build, £30,000 to Abbey Buildings Trust, in support of the redevelopment project, £25,000 towards play area improvements fund and £50,000 on a new climbing frame at Boxhill and a climbing unit at Caldecott play areas. We have received a further £26,233.83 in CIL funds, which rebuilt the CIL reserves to a closing balance (as of 31 March 2026) of £64,226.53. However, we have

already made a further commitment of £20,000 in the 2026/27 fiscal year in support of The Abbey Building Trust project; therefore, the uncommitted amount of CIL is £44,226.53.

Asset Management

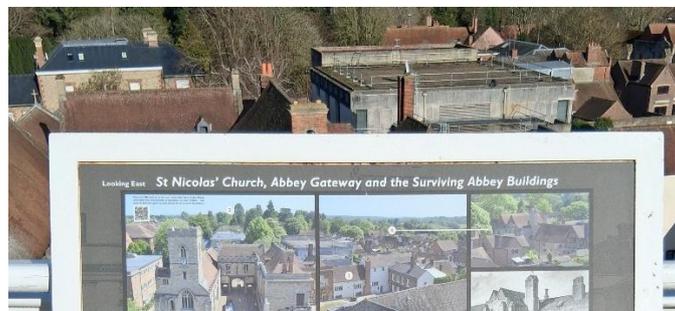
For the last few years much of the Council's attention has been focussed on the Abbey Hall - following the discovery that the roof had been built in the 1960's with asbestos and RAAC (Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete is a cheap form of lightweight concrete, which is now known to be susceptible to structural failure after 30 years). Specialist repair work was required with the subsequent redecoration and installation of lighting and roof inspection panels being completed last April, when the Abbey Cinema resumed full operation in the Hall. Subsequently the Council has sought expert legal, financial and technical advice so that it can make fully informed and legal decisions about the building's future.

Abingdon's most treasured asset is probably the County Hall. In March 2025 the floodlighting was replaced with energy efficient LEDs – the result was stunning:



The floodlit County Hall (Credit: Abingdon Blog)

During this year the County Hall improvements have continued: the external Museum Banners have been replaced – the 2011 banners were almost unreadable – whereas the new banners tell everyone what is housed in the building; English Heritage have carried out much-needed repainting work to the cupola; and the roof-top display boards have been updated.



We have also commissioned specialist restoration work to repair and improve the Guildhall's wooden windows. The work will focus on preserving the original features while improving their condition, performance and longevity. New draught-proofing is being installed within the

window frames, existing staff and parting beads replaced with modern draught-sealed version, and in some areas secondary glazing will also further improve insulation.

The Council has also been active on many other fronts - these are described in other Committee Reports.

Partnership Working

The Town Council continues to place great emphasis on actively working in partnership with local bodies – in the last year we have interacted with many bodies including Abingdon’s Police Community Support Officers, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, the Abbey Buildings Trust, Christ’s Hospital of Abingdon, ATOM, the Friends of Abingdon Civic Society, the Twin Towns Society, the South and Vale Citizen’s Advice Bureau, The Bridge, Be-Free-Young-Carers, the Abingdon Foyer, One Planet Abingdon, and the Abingdon Carousel - you will read more about the financial support the council gives some of these bodies and other groups, in the Community Committee’s report.

During the year we heard that the Abbey Building’s Trust had been awarded a major grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the upgrade and refurbishment of the Unicorn Theatre and Long Gallery. The Town Council had previously promised the HLF that should a grant be awarded it would contribute £50k per year for four years (this will partly be funded by our CIL funds). I can now report that the first payment has just been made, and that work is due to start in the Summer.

We continue to strive to ensure that the Market Place – the heart of our beautiful town – is used to the fullest possible extent. We actively encourage local clubs and societies to use the area to promote their groups and to fund-raise, and also facilitate its use for special events.

The year ahead

In January 2026 the Town Council agreed its budget for the next year (2026/27). It has significantly increased its property budget (to fund the Guildhall windows project and the installation of solar panels on the Cemetery Depot building), increased the budget for agriculture works (to keep the Council’s trees in good order), allocated £25k to support the “Reducing Domestic Abuse in Abingdon” initiative, increased the bus shelter repair and maintenance budget, increased its funding of youth projects by a further sum, allocated £20k to a major new “digital display” project in the Museum, and made provision for the impact of “Local Government Reorganisation”. It has also increased all its fees and charges, including the Cemetery charges, and the fees paid by our Market Traders.

Councillors are very aware of the cost-of-living crisis, which is still affecting everyone, and have limited the Council Tax increase to 4.73% (equivalent to an annual increase of £7.60 paid for a Band D house).

Finally, once again, I wish to conclude by thanking the Council’s staff and my fellow councillors for their commitment and the work that they do to make Abingdon a place we can all be proud of.

Councillor Jim Halliday
Chair of the Finance, Governance and Asset Management Committee
23 March 2026

Appendix A

HOW THE TOWN COUNCIL USE THE PRECEPT

The precept is the amount of money the Council needs to run its services for the year. It is based on the number of Band D properties in the area. The District Council includes the precept as part of residents' Council Tax bills and collects it on the Town Council's behalf.

The District Council must accept the amount requested (the precept) and collect it from residents in the parish as part of the overall Council Tax charge.

Grants

The Town Council gives major annual grants to the Abingdon Carousel Family Centre, Citizens Advice, Be Free Young Carers, One Planet Abingdon and others. This year it is also funding a new project to raise awareness about domestic violence.

Youth Strategy

It provides funding to The Abingdon Bridge and Damascus Youth Project and work with them to support young people across the town.

Outdoor Services

The Town Council provides and maintains six recreation areas, eight play areas and two football pitches. It is currently refurbishing and improving the play areas. The Council oversees the Town's cemeteries and provides the much loved flower displays around town.

Museum

The Town Council funds and manages the Museum in the County Hall, showing thousands of visitors our town's wonderful history every year.

Central Services

This covers the cost of the staff, office and other backroom services.

Events and Fairs

It organises Fun and Music in the Park, Clubs and Societies Day, hosts the annual Michaelmas Fair, puts up the Christmas lights and supports the switch-on event. It also organises and hosts civic events such as Remembrance Day and the famous bun throwings!

HOW THE TOWN COUNCIL USE THE PRECEPT

Markets

The Town Council runs the Charter Market every Monday and hosts Local Excellence Markets and Farmers' Markets. It also issues licenses for lots of tables and chairs for the cafes on the Market Place.

Climate and Nature

The Council provides premises for One Planet Abingdon, funds various biodiversity projects and supports local groups. It is investing in its property and vehicles to reduce its carbon footprint.

Communication

The Town Council funds the regular Town Crier magazine that is delivered to every house in the town and promotes town activities on social media, the Town Council website and via the network of noticeboards around the town.

Property

Property budget covers the maintenance and upkeep of all the council's buildings, including the Abbey Hall, Guildhall, County Hall and the Cemetery depot.

Democratic and Member Services

This includes election costs and supports elected members (councillors) in facilitating good decision-making processes.

