



# **ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL**

## **Council Summons and Agenda for Mayor-Making and the Annual Meeting of the Council**

Wednesday 19 May 2021

7pm

The Council Chamber, Guildhall  
Abingdon-on-Thames

To All Members of the Council

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby summoned to attend the Annual Meeting and Mayor-Making of the Council of the Town of Abingdon-on-Thames, to be held on **Wednesday 19 May 2021 at 7pm** for the transaction of the business stated below.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the Town Council will hold this meeting with a minimum number of Members present in person in order to achieve a quorum, with all other Members invited to join the proceedings online. Please see the note on governance at the end of this agenda.

For those Members attending separate instructions will be sent out ahead of the meeting, including measures being taken to keep the meeting as "Covid-secure" as is possible.

The meeting ID will be forwarded to Members separately.

Any members of the public who wish to attend should e-mail [democratic@abingdon.gov.uk](mailto:democratic@abingdon.gov.uk) and you will be sent the relevant link. The meeting will be conducted in the same way, as far as possible, as a meeting in person.

Any queries on the agenda should also be directed to [democratic@abingdon.gov.uk](mailto:democratic@abingdon.gov.uk).

Yours faithfully

*Nigel Warner*

Nigel Warner  
Town Clerk/ signed electronically

**Abingdon Town Council - Our Vision**

To develop an inclusive community so that Abingdon is the place where everyone wants to live and where the wellbeing of residents is prioritised. In developing this community the town will be one which is environmentally sustainable, vibrant, resilient and safe.

**Our key objectives**

- 1 To respond effectively and speedily to the climate emergency.
- 2 To develop a resilient, sustainable town which will provide a home for residents now and in the future.
- 3 To manage the Council's assets efficiently and effectively to meet for the needs of the community now and in the future.
- 4 To work with community partners to support those who are vulnerable and in need and to create opportunities to increase social inclusivity.

## **PRELIMINARY MEETING**

### **A Prayers**

Led by Revd. Dr. Charles Miller, Rector of Abingdon.

### **B Apologies**

To receive any apologies for absence. These will be carried forward to the Annual Meeting record.

### **C Declarations of Interest**

To receive any declarations of interest from Members in relation to any items to be considered at the meeting in accordance with the Local Code of Conduct.

### **D Mayor's Announcements including Mayor's Awards**

The Mayor, Cllr Charlie Birks, will make his announcements including:

- (i) The Mayor's Awards for services to the community. Full details of the recipients of the awards are online.
- (ii) His thanks to the Mayor's Cadets.
- (iii) Funds raised for his charities.

## **FORMAL ANNUAL MEETING**

**In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972 the first business of the Annual Meeting is the election of the Mayor.**

### **1 Election of Mayor**

To elect the Mayor for the civic year 2021-22.

The traditional speech to propose the Mayor will not be made at the meeting but will be published online due to the current circumstances: in order to ensure the safety of everybody involved, the business to be conducted in person will be as brief as possible.

The Mayor will then:

- (i) Make the Statutory Declaration of Office;
- (ii) Make a short speech and announce their Escort(s) for the year.

2 **Election of Deputy Mayor**

To elect the Deputy Mayor for the civic year 2021-22.

A copy of the traditional speech to propose the Mayor may be found online.

The Deputy Mayor will then:

- (i) Make the Statutory Declaration of Office;
- (ii) Make a short speech and announce their Escort for the year.

3 **Vote of thanks to the retiring Mayor**

A vote of thanks will be made to the retiring Mayor, Cllr Charlie Birks. Please see the statement on the Town Council website.

The retiring Mayor will receive a Past Mayor's badge.

4 **By-election Fitzharris Ock Ward; and Membership of Council Committees, Sub-Committees and other groups**

Report of Town Clerk [attached](#).

To report the result of the by-election for the Fitzharris Ock Ward.

To agree the membership of the following committees:

Urgency Committee

Planning, Highways and Consultations Advisory Committee

Amenities and Recreation Advisory Committee

Community Services Advisory Committee

County Hall Museum Management Advisory Committee

Green Advisory and Scrutiny Advisory Committee

Guildhall Advisory Committee

Finance and General Purposes Advisory Committee.

**5 Representation on outside bodies**

Report of Town Clerk [attached](#).

To agree Town Council representation on outside bodies.

**6 Announcements by the Mayor**

The Mayor will announce:

- (a) The appointment of the Mayor's Chaplain for 2021/22.
- (b) The appointment of Mayor's Cadets for 2021/22.
- (c) The Mayor's Charities for 2021/22.

**7 Closing Prayers**

## **Note on Governance**

### **Context**

At the start of the pandemic government approved the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 (“the 2020 Regulations”). These regulations enabled council meetings to take place online. However the Regulations expired on 6 May 2021. The government has not brought forward new legislation and a legal challenge in relation to the Local Government Act 1972, which if successful would have enabled virtual meetings to continue, failed.

The impact of the above is that from 7 May 2021 any meetings where decisions are taken – either by council or committees – are required to be in-person meetings.

The council has made representations to government regarding this matter as it considers this requirement to represent an unnecessary and avoidable risk to elected representatives and council officers. The council is keen to return to in-person meetings as soon as it is safe to do so but considers that councils should be able to take full advantage of modern technology to enable Councillors and the public to attend meetings virtually as well as in person.

Councils have responded in different ways to the new circumstances. At its meeting of 28 April 2021 the council decided to delegate all decision-making to an Urgency Committee comprising of 5 members. This committee will meet “in person” in accordance with the Local Government Act 1972. The council’s committees will continue to meeting virtually as Advisory Committees in order to discuss matters but will not make decisions; all committee recommendations will be referred to the Urgency Committee.

These arrangements have been made in response to the current continuing public health emergency. The arrangements are made on a temporary basis and will be reviewed regularly.

### **Council resolution of 28 April 2021**

The full text of the Council’s resolution is below:

- 1. Online attendance at Council meetings is no longer legal [for the purposes of making decisions] but the council considers that there remains a serious risk to health when meeting in person indoors. Consequently the Council delegates its powers to an Urgency Committee.*
- 2. Committees will meet online as advisory committees and will discuss business as usual. The recommendations and decisions will be advisory until they are ratified by the Urgency Committee, apart from the Planning, Highways and Consultations Committee, whose recommendations will be actioned immediately by the Town Clerk.*
- 3. Members of the public can continue to attend the advisory committee meetings via the joining link and apply to participate in the public participation section of the meeting.*

4. *The decisions made by the urgency committee will be in accordance with the recommendations from the advisory committees and not changed without a material reason.*
5. *The time and frequency of Urgency Committee will depend upon the urgency of recommendations coming up through the advisory committees. Non-members of the Committee and members of the public may view the meeting through the joining link but the provisions of the Council's public participation scheme will not apply.*
6. *The urgency committee will consist of five members. In accordance with standing orders the quorum will be three members and the provisions for substitute members will apply.*
7. *Meetings will take place subject to risk assessment and the Covid security precautions.*
8. *These arrangements will be in place until the Urgency Committee votes to change arrangements which will depend on legislation, guidance and health advice.*

*Attendance at meetings*

9. *With effect from 28 April 2021 any member who does not attend at least one meeting in a six-month period due to the risk to their health resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic has the requirements of Section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972 waived and the time limit extended.*
10. *The matter will be reviewed by the Urgency Committee every two months and if necessary a motion extending the time limit by a further six months will be considered.*