



# ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

Nigel E. Warner, M.A.(Oxon)  
Town Clerk  
Telephone: (01235) 522642  
Facsimile: (01235) 533112  
Email: enquiries@abingdon.gov.uk  
Website: www.abingdon.gov.uk

Royse Court,  
Bridge Street,  
Abingdon-on-Thames.  
OX14 3HU

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Council of Abingdon-on-Thames held on Wednesday 28 July 2021**

### **Present**

Cllr Cheryl Briggs	Mayor
Cllr Andy Foulsham	Deputy Mayor
Cllr Charlie Birks	
Cllr Samantha Bowring	Leader
Cllr Grace Clifton	
Cllr Neil Fawcett	
Cllr Patrick Lonergan	

### **In attendance in person**

Andy Crick	Committee Clerk (Clerk to the meeting)
Nigel Warner	Town Clerk

### **In attendance online**

Cllr Margaret Crick  
Cllr Eric de la Harpe  
Cllr Rawda Jehanli  
Cllr Lorraine Oates  
Cllr Helen Pighills  
Cllr Ulrike Rowbottom  
Cllr Andrew Skinner

Michelle Charlesworth	One Planet Oxfordshire
Alastair Fear	
Hester Hand	

Before the meeting began, the Chair advised Councillors of the death of Mrs Rhoda (Sue) Crane, Town Councillor from 1987 to 1995 and Mayor of Abingdon in 1993/94, having served as Deputy Mayor to William (Bill) Wivell in 1992/93. The meeting observed a minute's silence in memory of Mrs Crane.

## C21 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Gabby Barody, Cllr Andrew Coveney and Cllr Alex Greenaway.

A roll-call was taken of those Councillors attending in person and online.

## C22 **Declarations of Interest**

There were none.

## C23 **Public Participation**

Michelle Charlesworth from One Planet Oxfordshire gave a presentation to request support for Abingdon to become a One Planet town and for One Planet Oxfordshire to have use of the café space beneath the County Hall museum as a climate emergency centre for the town. Ms Charlesworth mentioned the work of Bioregional across Oxfordshire in creating the One Planet movement. Bioregional created the One Planet model 20 years ago, an approach based on ten principles which makes it holistic, flexible and easy to understand. She mentioned groups which supported the charity and referred to recent extreme weather events across the world and the aim of addressing the environment emergency in Abingdon.

Ms Charlesworth invited questions.

The work of the Outdoor Services team in cleaning up posters put up by Extinction Rebellion was mentioned. The group was asked to remove such posters if they are put up.

The new centre could work with the museum and consider displays and cultural interchange.

The planned centre needed to raise funds but hoped that it would be able to open soon.

The circular economy would be an important aspect of the centre and it would be good to be able to share and reuse items. Ms Charlesworth hoped that the centre could accommodate this but noted the limited space which would be available.

The Mayor thanked Ms Charlesworth for her contribution and noted that the suggestions in the paper submitted by her would be considered by officers.

Ms Charlesworth left the meeting at 7.54pm

## C24 **Minutes**

The draft minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 30 June 2021 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting and would be signed by the Chair.

## C25 **Section 85(1) Local Government Act 1972**

Council agreed at its meeting on 28 April 2021:

1. *‘That 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.*
2. *‘That the matter then be reviewed by the Urgency Committee every two months and if necessary a motion extending the time limit by a further six months be considered.*

*‘The matter has been reviewed by the Town Clerk, who considers that in the current circumstances of proceeding to Step 4 of the Government response to Covid, this matter should be reviewed by full Council and where the requirement is waived this should be by resolution of the Council.’*

This is in the context that, with the end of regulations regarding virtual meetings on 7 May, any attendance at council meetings for the purposes of the local government act must be “in person”.

It was proposed by Cllr Foulsham, seconded by Cllr Lonergan and agreed that, in accordance with the provisions of section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the requirement to attend meetings in person would be waived for Cllr Rob Maddison and Cllr Ulrike Rowbottom for the reason that both councillors were unable to attend meetings in person for health reasons and for reasons of the ongoing pandemic, as noted in item 1 of the Council resolution, until the Council meeting scheduled to take place on 30 January 2022 or the next meeting following 30 January 2022, should that meeting not take place, when the matter will be reviewed.

## C26 **Matter referred by Finance and General Purposes Committee: Governance review**

The Council considered five recommendations from the Finance and General Purposes Advisory Committee of 20 July 2021 with regard to future governance arrangements at the Town Council:

1. That the Committee recommend to the Town Council/Assembly and then the Urgency Committee that the report from LGRC “Governance Review – Final Report June 2021” is approved and that its recommendations are implemented in a phased manner with completion, as suggested in the report, by 31 March 2022.
2. That the Committee recommend to the Town Council/Assembly and then the Urgency Committee, in accordance with the report, that a governance working party for be

appointed to serve until 31 March 2022, whose terms of reference are to oversee the implementation and consisting of “the Mayor, the Council Leader, the immediate past Mayor, the Town Clerk, the Deputy Town Clerk and the Committee Clerk. They would be joined by other chairs of the new committees once they are appointed.”

3. That the Committee recommend to the Town Council/ Assembly and then the Urgency Committee that the following are approved for implementation with the following timelines:
  - 3.1 Appendix 1: scheme of delegations – 1 September 2021
  - 3.2 Appendix 4: reports – 1 September 2021
  - 3.3 Appendix 5: minuting policy – 1 September 2021
4. That the Committee recommend to the Town Council Assembly and then the Urgency Committee that the following are noted:
  - 4.1 Appendix 6: survey data
  - 4.2 Appendix 7: IAFC good governance in the public sector
5. That the Town Council/ Assembly and the Urgency Committee note that the officers will come back to members to consider appendix 2 – draft standing orders and appendix 3 – governance review checklist.

The Town Clerk noted that the working party to be established under recommendation 2 would be able to make changes to the process as necessary. This is described in the LGRC report on the governance review (page 20, paragraph IX: *‘The governance working party will oversee the implementation of the new structure between July 2021 and March 2022 and put in place any remedial or refining action needed as practice dictates. The committee should specifically review and refine the specific delegations to the committee and to officers after 6 months experience.’*).

The Leader, Cllr Bowring, recommended the changes, which would ensure that Town Council standing committees would share responsibilities more equitably. The proposals from government to change planning regulations could be accommodated within the changes to the committee structure and would allow more operational control to rest with staff at the Town Council. Councillors have been able to engage with the governance review over a considerable period and the final recommendations would provide a foundation for future governance of the Town Council.

The Mayor suggested an indicative vote of all councillors including those not present in the room to allow everyone to express their view. After this, the councillors present in the room would vote on the proposals.

Indicative vote of all Members present and online: for 11, against 0, abstain 2.

Vote of Members present in person at the meeting: for 6, against 0, abstain 1

The proposals were approved.

The Mayor announced a special Town Council meeting to be held on Wednesday 1 September 2021 to appoint the membership of the new committees.

**C27 Covid update**

The meeting received and considered a report from the Town Clerk, who emphasised continued caution on the part of the Town Council.

**C28 Report of Town Clerk**

The Council considered a report from the Town Clerk.

Meetings of the Town Council and its committees

The Town Clerk updated Councillors on arrangements at the Town Council to manage the risks associated with the pandemic and expressed frustration at the need to meet in person from May 2021, which put Members and staff at unnecessary risk. The report was noted.

Review of open spaces/land holdings

The Town Council noted the report of the Town Clerk on this matter.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm