

# **Finance, Governance and Asset Management Committee**

## **Report to the Annual Parish Meeting 2023**

### **Finance**

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.

In 2023-4 the town council plans to spend £2,136,960 (net). This will require a precept of £1,823,626 and will include significant expenditure from developer funding for active travel, sports and play areas. The cost to residents will be £146.26 for a Band D property - £2.81 per week

This budget funds 11 full time and 12 part time staff. The town council is a living wage employer and the gender pay gap for 2022-3 is 2% in favour of women. The ratio between the highest and lowest paid members of staff is under 3.

We have reviewed our processes and updated technology which has saved money in real terms, meaning that we have kept the council tax rise well below inflation. We opted for a small rise so that we do not have to cut revenue expenditure or cancel any planned projects by using reserves. We have healthy reserves at present but most of these are allocated to projects which are in the pipeline.

We receive funding from the Community Infrastructure Levy, which comes from major local developments. We have allocated some of this funding to improving play areas and sports facility and hope to use more of it to fund initiatives arising from the Abingdon Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

### **Asset Management**

We have a number of assets which we manage on behalf of the community, including the Guildhall complex and the County Hall building in which our museum service and the climate emergency centre live. We look after these buildings and keep them in good repair.

We are committed to energy efficiency as part of our commitment to reducing emissions and to getting the best value for council tax payers. Inclusion is also important to us, which is why

councillors have requested an accessibility audit to ensure that our buildings and services are as accessible to all as they can be and do not discriminate against a physical disability, impairment, health condition, age, race or sex.

The Finance, Governance and Asset Management Committee (FGAM) looks after the fabric of our buildings, while the museum service sits with Community Services Committee, as does the Climate Emergency Centre in the County Hall basement.

We have started exploring installing a lift to all floors at the museum, a plan which is at an early stage. Whether it can proceed will depend on permission from English Heritage, which is why information on this is fairly limited at present.

Following the success of the Climate Emergency Centre moving into the County Hall basement we have now agreed a five-year lease with this project which means they have the security to develop the service.

We are committed to keeping a cinema service in Abingdon and presently lease the Abbey Hall part of the Guildhall Complex to a commercial cinema operator. We are keen to offer a long-term lease giving all parties security and the ability to develop the service.

We presently have a contract with the same operator to manage the old rooms at the Guildhall. We are considering what the best use of the rooms will be for the residents of Abingdon to put together the specification for renewing the management contract in a way that maximises the potential of the rooms to offer services to residents.

## **Governance**

The town council has four committees which you are hearing from tonight and task-based working groups are convened as needed. The town council makes all information public unless it relates to an individual such as a member of staff or includes commercially sensitive information about a business. We have had our governance reviewed by an external expert.

We also have a personnel committee to manage staff. Job descriptions, salaries and workloads were last reviewed by an external expert in 2020.

At the end of 2022 our Town Clerk retired after 22 years' service and we have been delighted to welcome Alan Rouse as our new Town Clerk.

Cllr Samantha Bowring  
Chair, Finance, Governance and Asset Management Committee  
1 March 2023