



Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

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Finance, Governance and Asset Management Committee, Wednesday 15 March 2023 Draft minutes

Present:

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| Cllr Samantha Bowring | Chair |
| Cllr Jim Halliday | Vice Chair |
| Cllr Neil Fawcett | Chair Community Committee |
| Cllr Andrew Skinner | Chair of the Town Infrastructure Committee |

In attendance:

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| Cherie Carruthers | Responsible Finance Officer |
| Andy Crick | Democratic Services Officer (clerk to the meeting) |
| Victoria Moore | Properties and Events Officer |

In attendance online:

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| Dan Sancisi | Museum Manager |
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SECTION I (Open to the Public Including the Press)

F76/22 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Gabby Barody, Cllr Andy Foulsham and Cllr Ulrike Rowbottom.

F77/22 **Declarations of interest**

There were none.

F78/22 **Statements and Questions from the Public**

There were none.

F79/22 **Minutes**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Bowring, **seconded** by Cllr Skinner and **RESOLVED** that, the minutes of the meeting of the Finance, Governance and Asset Management Committee of 17 January 2023, be **APPROVED** and be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

F80/22 **Finance report**

The committee considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) which included details of payments made between 1 January 2023 – 28 February 2023, management accounts to 28 February 2023, and summary management accounts at 28 February 2023.

The RFO was asked about payments made for legal consultancy on the Legal/HR code, which had exceeded the planned budget. The RFO confirmed that this is for a consultant who had been instructed approximately two years previously, to list and log all the council's land assets into a digital software system. It was agreed that this spend needed to be recharged to another budget line, under Property Legal and Valuation Advice. The RFO is trying to source the original letter of engagement and will bring this back to a later meeting, if found. The committee asked officers to report to a future meeting on the property ownership project, detailing what was discovered and how much was spent.

The committee asked the RFO to report to a future meeting on the processes for addressing budget overspending in specific areas, how this is agreed and what due diligence is covered in approving the overspend.

Cllr Neil Fawcett joined the meeting at 7.21pm.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Bowring and **RESOLVED** that the list of payments made between 1 January 2023 – 28 February 2023 be approved.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Bowring, **seconded** by Cllr Halliday and **RESOLVED** that the management accounts to 28 February 2023 be approved.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Bowring, **seconded** by Cllr Halliday and **RESOLVED** that the summary management accounts be approved.

F81/22 **Report of Museum Manager**

The committee considered a report from the Museum Manager, who joined the meeting online.

The committee asked the Museum Manager to request a report from Ridge, the consultants undertaking a feasibility study for the proposed new lift, to be presented

to the next meeting on 14 June 2023.

F82/22 **Property update**

The committee considered a [report](#) from the Properties and Events Officer on current and planned works.

The Properties and Events Officer was asked to provide further details on options for the Guildhall car park to the next meeting of the committee. This item should be added to the forward plan.

The RFO was asked to investigate funds held in reserves from the Joint Environmental Trust (JET) for work on the war memorial. The RFO advised that all funds held as 'earmarked reserves' (EMR) would be reviewed as part of the end of year account balancing. A recommendation would be made to the next meeting.

The Properties and Events Officer would add all scheduled work to the forward plan.

F83/22 **Property working party**

The committee considered whether to appoint a new property working party to engage with the Properties and Events Officer to enable a full understanding of property issues and support the Properties and Events Officer. The Properties and Events Officer was asked to identify what would be a useful way of working with the committee at its next meeting, in particular whether a property working group would be helpful.

F84/22 **New councillor induction**

The committee considered support options to be provided by officers for the new administration. The following items were identified:

- Training:
 - Some in-house training can be delivered to new councillors.
 - Chaining meetings
 - OALC provide training for new and existing councillors
- A skills audit would be undertaken to identify relevant skills of new councillors.
- Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) - it may be advantageous to arrange a local strategy/training day for town councillors
- Strategy day to set out aims and objectives of the new council and to identify operational and strategic areas.
- History and treasures day
- Tour of council assets and properties, including the cemetery and play areas
- IT equipment: the RFO would look at options for new councillors, inviting them to opt into to receive equipment, as many will have their own equipment which can be used for town council work. All councillors would be given access to M365 online services and training would be provided.

A welcome pack is being prepared by officers.

Officers would look into cleaning and repairing civic regalia.

F85/22 **Staffing matters**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Halliday and **RECOMMENDED** to the town council that the locum Deputy Town Clerk takes up the role of Town Clerk on a twelve month contract following the resignation of the current town clerk.

F86/22 **Environmental implications**

The committee referred to the discussion over IT provision for new councillors to reduce the future use of paper by the town council.

F87/22 **Publicity**

No items were suggested.

F88/22 **Forward plan**

The committee reviewed the forward plan.

- Building maintenance & improvement programme: the Properties and Events Officer was asked to update the forward plan with details of pre-planning application currently being considered for changes to the Guildhall Historic Rooms and to report to the committee in October of each year with a properties work programme.

F89/22 **Actions Register**

The committee reviewed the actions register and noted that a number of actions had not been updated. The Town Clerk was asked to ensure that the actions register was updated.

F90/22 **Future Agenda items**

The following items were noted for future agendas.

- Scheme of delegations and committee terms of reference
- Standing orders
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Working parties: a report with recommendations regarding the operation of working parties

- Monument to Queen Elizabeth II: to consider a monument to Queen Elizabeth II
- Town Clerk to update members on training options
- Draft Councillor/Officer Protocol
- June 2023 – Properties and Events Officer to introduce their properties role and to identify what would be a useful way of working with the committee, in particular whether a property working group would be helpful.

F91/22 **Dates of future meetings**

The date of the next meeting was noted: 14 June 2023

F92/22 **Exclusion of the public, including the press**

The Chair moved and it was agreed that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

SECTION II (Confidential)

F93/22 **Property matters**

The committee considered a report about the Abbey Hall and Guildhall. A confidential appendix to the minutes is available to committee members and councillors.

F94/22 **Friends of Abingdon Abbey Buildings Trust grant**

The committee received an update from the Town Clerk.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Bowring, **seconded** by Cllr Halliday and **AGREED** that the requested funds be released, as previously agreed by the town council on 29 January 2020.

The meeting closed at 10pm