



# ABINGDON TOWN COUNCIL TOWN CLERK



# WELCOME FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

Abingdon is a vibrant market town in Oxfordshire with a strong sense of community and a lively culture.

The town has many well-educated residents working in local technology firms and local universities. It also has areas of deprivation with many disadvantaged residents whom can potentially benefit from council services.

Higher level services are delivered by Oxfordshire County Council and the Vale of White Horse District Council. Both councils face budgetary pressures and Abingdon Town Council is well placed to help residents as other councils face cuts to services and residents face the ongoing cost-of-living crisis. The council is committed to delivering services in a sustainable way and working with community partners to maximise what we offer our residents. Priorities include responding to the climate emergency and biodiversity crisis, building an economically vibrant and sustainable town with a home for everyone and looking after the most needy residents of the town.

Abingdon is one of the oldest towns in the United Kingdom but has a forward-looking council who are keen to use technology and new methods to offer the greatest possible range of services to our residents in a cost effective and efficient manner and to create an inclusive and welcoming environment (for both residents and visitors).

***Cllr Jim Halliday***

Leader of the Council



## ABOUT THE TOWN

Abingdon has a rich heritage which is steeped in [history](#). The town has been home to local residents since 700 BC and can claim to be the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in England, with evidence of Iron Age, Roman and Saxon settlements found during excavations.

The town grew up outside the gates of the seventh century Abingdon Abbey which, at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in 1538 was the sixth richest in Britain. Little of the Abbey remained following the dissolution but the town continued to develop and prosper.

In 1556, Abingdon received its first Royal Charter from Queen Mary I. The Charter provided for the creation of the Borough Council and granted a number of rights and privileges to the town. Abingdon developed as one of the chief towns in Berkshire and was until 1868 the county town of Berkshire. During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries the town grew considerably and became home to a number of major industries, including the MG Car Works, Morland's Brewery and the Pavlova Leather Company. Whilst these historic industries eventually disappeared the town continues to be home to many employers, with a bias to the scientific and engineering sectors, and nearby major employment sites at Culham, Harwell and Milton Park, which are now part of the "Science Vale".

The pace of growth in Abingdon increased from the 1960s onwards, with major housing developments and the population of the town grew from 18,575 in 1971 to 34,569 in 2020 (mid-year estimate).

Further historical information may be accessed by clicking [here](#).

Abingdon is often considered to be a typical market town based in a prosperous region. This is evidenced in many of the statistics in relation to the town; those bullet-pointed below give just a snapshot:

- Average weekly household income of £1,014 compared with the average in England of £766 (ONS / 2013/14). After deducting housing costs this falls to £668 (average for England £495).
- There were 180 unemployment benefit claimants in October 2017 representing 0.8% of adults (aged 16-64) compared with the average for England of 1.9%.
- Recorded crime is roughly half the English average, based on 168 crimes in March 2017, representing five per 1,000 of the population compared with the English average of 10.
- There is a high level of satisfaction with the local areas as a place to live, at 86% compared with the English average of 79% (Place Survey 2008).

Although Abingdon has much to commend it, it also has its problems; again, there are many statistics to back this up and just a few of these are detailed below.

- There are significant areas of deprivation within the town. Abingdon has one area, within Abingdon Caldecott Ward, which is ranked within the 20% most deprived areas nationally (Abingdon Caldecott LSOA 008c). The area is within the 10% most deprived on education, skills and training. 38% of people have no qualifications (compared with Abingdon overall – 17%, National average 22%). The area is within the 20% most deprived in relation to income and employment (2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation).

- According to End Child Poverty estimates for 2017/18, the Caldecott and Ock Meadow wards each had over a quarter of children living in poverty (after housing costs) and were both in the top quarter most affected wards in the Vale of White Horse district. However, Peachcroft ward had the lowest incidence of children living in poverty (after housing costs) in the district (11%).
- There are pensioners facing challenges without access to transport, who are lonely and who are in poverty. This varies considerably across the town. Taking one index in relation to poverty, 8.4% of pensioners in Abingdon claim pension credit (DWP May 2017). This is almost half compared with the England average of 15.6%. However, in the Abingdon Caldecott LSOA 008c area, the figure is over double the national average, at 32.5% (DWP August 2016).
- Whilst most health and wellbeing measures in Abingdon are statistically similar to or better than the English average, hospital stays for self-harm are statistically worse than average in three wards, Abbey Northcourt, Caldecott and Fitzharris. GP practice data also shows that prevalence in depression recorded by each of the four GP practices in Abingdon was well above the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and England averages.
- In common with many towns housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable, particularly for younger people. From the year ending September 2014 to the year ending September 2019, the median price paid for semi-detached dwellings in England rose from £175,000 to £216,000, an increase of 24%. During this period house prices rose in the five Abingdon wards by between -1% and 26% but for all Abingdon wards were significantly higher than the England average, the median price for semi-detached dwellings in ranging from £301,250 in Abingdon Caldecott to £360,000 in Abingdon Fitzharris.
- Large housing estates were developed at a time when local authority powers and priorities did not provide for what are now considered to be adequate community facilities and infrastructure.
- Abingdon operates within a national context of difficult economic circumstances and structural changes to retailing. However, with much of the town's development in the 1960s and 1970s, planning permissions were granted for out-of-town retailing and the town centre precinct which may not have been allowed today. This has had a detrimental effect on the town centre which is further limited by the constraints of the historic town centre with traffic negotiating narrow streets, a difficult pedestrian and cycling environment and poor air quality.

Consequently, the town has significant challenges and problems, and the Town Council is determined to work with the community to exercise its powers in meeting the challenges and improving opportunities for all who live in the town.

**Sources:**

*“Community Insight” profiles for “Oxfordshire Las only,” “South Abingdon Priority Community” and Abingdon Caldecott LSOA 008c” areas, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2017.*

[Abingdon Community profile of Health and Wellbeing evidence from the Oxfordshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, October 2017.](#)

*“Community Insight” profile for “Abingdon” area, 26<sup>th</sup> January 2018.*

## ABOUT THE COUNCIL

Abingdon is a large parish council in the [Vale of White Horse district](#) of Oxfordshire. The Council comprises 19 [councillors](#), which are Liberal Democrat with currently one vacancy. Elections are due for all seats in May 2027. The Council is chaired by the [Mayor](#), Gwyneth Lewis assisted by the Deputy Mayor, Cllr Gabby Barody. It has four standing [committees](#) to assist in service delivery – Finance, Governance & Asset Management (the Chair of which, Cllr Jim Halliday, is also the Leader of the Council), Community, Environment & Amenities and Town Infrastructure.

The Council employs 25 staff (11 full-time and 14 part-time). The Council's Chief Executive Officer is currently covered by an Interim Town Clerk, Paula Lopez. The Town Clerk is supported by four heads of service: Deputy Town Clerk/RFO, Cemetery and Outdoor Services Manager, Museum Manager and Properties & Events Officer. The Council pays the living wage. Our gender pay gap is 2% in favour of women and the ratio between the highest and lowest paid members of staff is 3.19 (2022-21).

The Council has an annual gross budget of £2,201,958 and a net expenditure budget of £1,830,659 (estimate: 2023-24). The Council's budget is funded by way of a precept of £1,755,659 and £75,000 from developer funding, resulting on a council tax of £141.76 for a Band D property.

In delivering its services the Council is responsible for a major operational property portfolio of buildings including the [Guildhall](#), the [Old County Hall \(Museum\)](#), two cemetery lodges and two cemetery chapels.

To support its work the Council has adopted a prudent financial approach, setting a realistic precept and balancing its budget each year and holds significant financial reserves commensurate with its expenditure and its assets. Further details in relation to finances may be found [here](#).

## 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.

## OUR SERVICES

The Council provides the following services:

- Action to address the climate emergency and improve biodiversity with partners including support for the [Climate Emergency Centre](#) based at the [Abingdon County Hall Museum](#).
- Abingdon in Bloom
- Adverse weather assistance ([salt bins](#) and snow clearance, assisting other authorities in flooding emergencies)
- [Allotments](#) (three sites operated through allotment associations)
- Historic [archives](#), treasures and works of art of which the Town Council is custodian. The Council has an Honorary Archivist.
- Support for local bus services (service 41)
- Bus shelters and other street furniture
- Two [cemeteries](#) and considering plans for a new cemetery; two closed churchyards
- [Christmas lights](#)
- Civic and ceremonial events including the annual Remembrance Day commemoration and Mayor Making. The Council has an Honorary Macebearer.
- [Communications](#) including the website [www.abingdon.gov.uk](http://www.abingdon.gov.uk) , social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, the [Town Crier](#) magazine, the Guild of Town Criers and noticeboards
- Consultees on numerous matters affecting the town including transport and health services. The Council has recently made an application to the County Council to make the town a 20mph zone to help improve the environment and improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Community support, with partners, during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic
- [Events](#). Last year the Council organised a program of Platinum Jubilee events attracting 22,000 people to events over a four-day celebration. It also works in partnership with others in relation to events such as Heritage Day, Christmas Extravaganza and Abingdon Pride
- [Fairs](#) – the autumn Michaelmas Fair is the longest street fair in Europe

- [Fisheries](#) – the Council operates the Abingdon Fisheries
- [Grants](#) to organisations. This includes a community grants scheme available by application and annual grants to organisations including the [Citizens' Advice Bureau](#), [Abingdon Carousel](#), the [Abingdon Bridge](#) and [Christ's Hospital](#) (in relation to the Albert Park)
- [The Guildhall](#) - a building comprising historic rooms offered for hire for events and meetings and a 1966 extension which is currently leased.
- The [Information Centre](#) – including a shared reception area with the Abingdon Registration Office
- [Markets](#)
- [The Market Place](#)
- [Abingdon County Hall Museum](#)
- [Planning](#), including responding to district council consultations and undertaking conservation area appraisals and working with the community towards the approval of a [Neighbourhood Plan](#)
- Part funding for a [Police Community Support Officer](#)
- [Recreation](#) and open spaces including eight play areas, Boxhill and Caldecott Recreation Grounds (which include football pitches), Boxhill Wood and the Ock Valley Walk
- [Town Twinning](#)
- [War Memorial](#)
- [Integrated Youth Support Project](#) working with our partners at the [Abingdon Bridge](#) and [Abingdon DAMASCUS Youth Project](#) and including the establishment of a Youth Council.

The Council is the successor authority to Abingdon Borough Council, established in 1556. It has a [long history](#) and maintains the traditions of a ceremonial council. However, Abingdon is a forward-looking council and has adopted an agenda of modernisation since the current council was elected in 2019, which the new Town Clerk will be tasked with developing further.

The Council has maintained the many and varied services which it has inherited but has also resolved to focus on what it by adopting the Vision and Key Objectives which are detailed above and which determine its actions and decisions. The Vision and Key Objectives are delivered through a Forward Plan which is regularly reviewed by the Council.

# TOWN CLERK

## JOB DESCRIPTION

### Salary

Full-time: salary range £58,583 to £65,803 (LC4 substantive, NJC pay spine points 50 to 54).

### Overview:

Works in partnership with Members to provide leadership, vision, and strategic direction to the Council.

Is responsible to the Council as the statutory Head of the Paid Service, for the effective management of the Authority, for providing advice and guidance on major policy options and for ensuring the effective implementation of Council policies. This includes responsibilities for delivery of the most effective possible service to the public, subject to the resources available, for the determination with the Council, of corporate objectives and for monitoring performance in the attainment of those objectives.

Demonstrates the leadership necessary to manage a complex public body.

Acts as an ambassador for the Council to ensure it is fully engaged with its stakeholders and communities and fulfilling its community leadership role on a local, regional and national level.

### Business Planning, Vision and Project Management

- To organise, co-ordinate and produce with Elected Members a Vision statement with overall objectives for the Council and aspirations for the term
- To prepare and implement an annual business plan with outline budgets based on a four-year plan covering each overall vision objective or priority identified by Council
- To align staff activity to the delivery of the Council's plans.

### Strategic responsibilities

- To head the Council's paid service and be the Council's principal adviser; to manage the Council's services, resources and staff; to advise upon and administer all aspects of the Council's work
- To proactively manage the expedient completion of tasks, projects, and activities
- To provide and/or source relevant and regular continuing professional development and appropriate training for staff and Members
- To act as the Council's representative, proactively ensuring effective and inclusive development and dissemination of regular communications, using up-to-date and inclusive means.



## Staff responsibilities

- To carry out regular staff appraisals to identify individual staff development and training needs and to ensure job performance accords with the requirements of the post; this should include standard good practice, including staff feedback and comprehensive record-keeping
- To identify and establish with each member of staff a personal development plan to enable them to develop their contribution
- To monitor the effectiveness of training and other staff development activity, including feedback by attendees, reporting as appropriate
- To set and maintain professional standards throughout the staff team acting when necessary to uphold these standards within the Council's Equal Opportunities Policy
- To manage attendance, sickness, annual leave, time off in lieu, etc., within established policies
- To monitor and advise on any changes to employment law or national agreements
- To be responsible for reviewing the staff handbook and to advise Members on proposed changes, including those necessary to comply with HR legislation and good practice
- To be responsible for the recruitment of staff in accordance with the Council's agreed establishment structure.

## Statutory responsibilities

- To advise members of the options available on matters raised at meetings, upon which decisions are required
- To keep under continuous review the legal framework within which the council operates advising members of changes or proposed changes to law or public policy which may affect the Council
- To ensure that all meetings are called within the legally required timescales and in the proper manner and that all agendas are properly presented
- To advise the Council on points of procedure to ensure that business is conducted in a lawful manner and legally competent decisions are made and recorded
- To research and present available options to members on any matter before them and verify third-party reports, so far as practical, to facilitate lawful and reasonable decision-making
- To minute, or arrange for minutes to be made, of all formal meetings of council or its committees to ensure that resolutions are accurately recorded, with sufficient detail of discussion to show proper consideration of all relevant matters
- To monitor the effectiveness of procedures and policies and advise Council when reviews or updates are appropriate, and to advise of options available
- To manage the Council's properties and buildings, ensuring that the Council's obligations for risk management are properly discharged and that the Council complies with health and safety legislation
- To arrange for contractor performance to be adequately monitored and for appropriate reports to be brought to Council

## Financial responsibilities

- To monitor the Responsible Financial Officer (s151 Local Government Act 1972) and oversee this function

## Communications responsibilities

- To act as principal conduit of communication for the Council

## Civic responsibilities

- To oversee and address the Council's ceremonial and civic functions

## Personal development responsibilities

- To achieve and maintain the qualification necessary for the council's eligibility for the General Power of Competence (as provided in the Localism Act 2011 ss1-8)

## Other responsibilities

- The post holder may be required to work unsocial hours including evenings and weekends
- The post holder will be required to comply with the Council's policies and procedures, and to undertake training as required
- All employees must be able to commit to Abingdon Town Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and values, treating colleagues and customers with dignity and respect

This document describes in general terms the duties and responsibilities of the post at the time it was drafted. This is not to be taken as exhaustive nor exclusive, and duties may be varied at any time, in consultation with the postholder, to meet the needs of the service

# Abingdon Town Clerk

## PERSON SPECIFICATION

Competence	Level Required	Demonstrated by	Importance (E: Essential, D: Desirable)
Team management and Leadership	Able to lead, direct and motivate a team, to effectively build teams and encourage collaborative working between team members, councillors, and other stakeholders.	At least two years in a senior management position, involving direct management of a team of employees and direct accountability e.g., to Councillors or a management board	E
Communication skills	A high level of written, reporting, and presentational skills; excellent interpersonal skills; understanding of marketing and publicity; experience of conducting public consultation exercises, and of pro-active communication with local press and other media	Previous experience in a post demanding application of these skills, and involvement in marketing facilities/or services and in external relations. Written communication skills will be assessed during the selection process and you may be asked to make a presentation to the Council.	E
Administrative and Organisational skills	Understanding of effective business administration to create organisational effectiveness	Previous success in establishing and managing new or changed organisational structures	E
Experience and knowledge of Local Government as a Clerk	A good understanding of Local Government's structure, functions, responsibilities, and procedures especially those relating to the clerk's role	Previous experience working with and advising local authority Committees and elected members as a Clerk; demonstrable understanding of the legal requirements affecting local authorities; awareness of situations where external professional advice (e.g., from solicitors) is appropriate	E

Financial Management	Council policy is to separate RFO and Chief Exec roles, but this post requires Competency in management of a significant budget, understanding of budget control, and of financial analysis and process	Previous responsibility for a major budget (>£0.5m); demonstrable understanding of issues of probity and sound financial management applying in the public sector	D
Service Delivery	Able to apply key principles of effective service provision, customer care, service planning, etc.	Record of achievement on running and developing services directly or through contractors; familiarity with concepts of business and service planning	D
Managing Contractors	Ability to secure effective running and/or maintenance of Council facilities by contractors, voluntary groups, etc.	Previous experience of specifying and monitoring services to be provided by others, or of having managed staff with that responsibility	D
Policy and strategic management	Policy analysis skills and the ability to address and resolve complex issues	Evidence of giving advice on policy issues, and of recommending strategy on difficult/complex issues	E
Legal knowledge and skills	Understanding of legal responsibilities and sufficient general understanding of the law to be able to procure effective legal advice and support. Hold or achieve within two years a qualification necessary for the council to exercise the Power of General Competence	Hold qualification as prescribed in The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012 (SI2012/965	E
Information & Communications Technology	Non-technical understanding and to be comfortable with the use and application of collaborative ICT	Evidence of the use of ICT to meet practical needs and improve effectiveness in a business setting	D
Political Sensitivity	Able to gain and retain the confidence of Councillors, local community representatives, outside organisations	Able to demonstrate or articulate the key practical requirements for operating in a political environment	E
Operational	Able to attend evening and weekend events, and play a part in ceremonial and related activities	Acceptance at time of appointment	E

Personal qualities	Approachable and responsive with staff and members of the public. Able to secure good relationships with Councillors and other stakeholders. Able to work effectively under pressure. Self-reliant, open, and honest. Practical with common sense approach to problem solving. Trustworthy with confidential information. Capable of anticipating problems and showing initiative to solve them. Receptive to change and new ideas. Methodical and thorough approach.	Previous experience in a post demanding application of these skills; involvement in services and/or in external relations (demonstrated at interview).	E
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# TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

[Abingdon Town Council are signed up to the NALC/SLCC agreement for clerks](#)

[Link to Staff Handbook](#)

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

The Council is entitled to introduce minor and non-fundamental changes to this policy by notifying employees of these changes in writing and will consult on any significant changes.

- 1 The Council is an equal opportunity employer. We are committed to ensuring within the framework of the law that our workplaces are free from unlawful or unfair discrimination because of Protected Characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. We have adopted this policy as a means of helping to achieve these aims.
- 2 The Protected Characteristics are
  - Age
  - Disability
  - Gender Reassignment
  - Race
  - Religion or Belief
  - Gender
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Marriage and Civil Partnership
  - Pregnancy and Maternity
- 3 We aim to ensure that our employees achieve their full potential and that all employment decisions are taken without reference to irrelevant or discriminatory criteria.

### What is discrimination?

- 4 **Direct discrimination** – when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a Protected Characteristic.
- 5 **Associative discrimination or discrimination by association** – direct discrimination against someone because they associate with another person who possesses a Protected Characteristic.

- 6 **Discrimination by perception** – direct discrimination against someone because it is thought that they possess a particular Protected Characteristic even if they do not actually possess it.
- 7 **Indirect discrimination** - occurs where an individual's employment is subject to an unjustified provision criterion or practice which e.g. one sex or race or nationality or age group finds more difficult to meet, although on the face of it the provision, criterion or practice is 'neutral'.
- 8 **Harassment** – unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual. Employees may complain of such offensive behaviour even if it is not directed towards them personally.
- 9 **Victimisation** – when an employee is treated less favourably because they have made or supported a complaint or raised a grievance under the Equality Act 2010 or are suspected of doing so.

## Commitment

- 10 The Council is committed to ensuring that all employees and applicants for employment are protected from unlawful discrimination in employment.
- 11 Recruitment and employment decisions will be made on the basis of fair and objective criteria.
- 12 Person and job specifications shall be limited to those requirements which are necessary for the effective performance of the job.
- 13 Interviews will be conducted on an objective basis and personal or home commitments will not form the basis of employment decisions except where necessary and relevant.
- 14 All employees have a right to equality of opportunity and a duty to implement this policy. Discrimination is a serious disciplinary matter which will normally be treated as gross misconduct.
- 15 Anyone who believes that he or she may have been disadvantaged on discriminatory grounds should raise the matter through the Council's grievance procedure.

## HOW TO APPLY

We are conducting this recruitment electronically, and ask you to apply using our application form, available at: <https://www.abingdon.gov.uk/town-council/job-vacancies-at-abingdon-town-council> Here you will also find all the relevant details.

If you wish, you may submit your Curriculum Vitae **in addition**. (Note: CVs by themselves will not be accepted). Please:

- download the application form and save it to your computer with a file name that identifies it as yours
- complete the application
- keep a copy for your own records
- return it to [townclerk@abingdon.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@abingdon.gov.uk) (accompanied by your CV if you wish)
- let us know of any adaptations you may require to the interview process to accommodate any disability
- Please see the programme timetable below for key dates
- If you would like more information or an informal chat to learn more about the Council or the job before deciding whether to apply, feel free to contact (during office hours only please) Paula Lopez, Interim Town Clerk, ([townclerk@abingdon.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@abingdon.gov.uk)) or by calling 01235 522642

## SELECTION PROCESS AND TIMETABLE

Shortlisted candidates will be expected to undertake the following:

- A 10–15-minute presentation on a subject to be advised in advance of the interview
- An in-depth interview – likely to last an hour in total – giving the candidate the opportunity to set out in full how they meet the requirements of the post and Person Specification, etc.
- Credo psychometric test – further details to be provided to shortlisted candidates
- An opportunity to meet with key Council stakeholders – date to be advised to shortlisted candidates.

Closing date for receipt of applications	Friday 13 October 2023 1700hrs
Interview dates	Thursday 26 October 2023 or Friday 27 October 2023