



## Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

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# Community Committee Wednesday 11 June 2025, 7pm Old Magistrates' Court Minutes

## Present:

Cllr Neil Fawcett  
Cllr Penny Clover  
Cllr Murali Gunarajah  
Cllr Pat Lonergan  
Cllr Victoria Walker  
Cllr Jim Halliday

Chair  
Vice-Chair

Chair of the Finance, Governance & Asset Management  
committee – ex-officio

## In attendance:

Cherie Carruthers  
Andy Crick  
Lizzie Martin

Town Clerk/Chief Executive  
Democratic Services Officer (clerk to the meeting)  
Project Manager: Business and Community Engagement

## **SECTION I - open to the public including the Press**

### C1/25 **Apologies**

The Mayor, Cllr Rawda Jehanli, Cllr Cheryl Briggs and Cllr Andrew Skinner did not attend the meeting.

### C2/25 **Declarations of interest**

None.

C3/25 **Statements and Questions from the Public**

None.

C4/25 **Terms of reference**

The terms of reference for the committee were noted. Committee members were recommended by the Chair to read the terms of reference to help them understand how the committee works.

C5/25 **Minutes**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Lonergan, **seconded** by Cllr Gunarajah and **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Community Committee of 4 February 2025 be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting, to be signed by the Chair.

C6/25 **Finance Report**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Lonergan and **RESOLVED** that the management accounts to 30 April 2025 be approved.

The RFO noted that early outgoings are high due to payment of large annual grants.

The committee was advised that the old Christmas lights were being considered for sale and the Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager is working on this. It was suggested that the poppy lights could be advertised through the Royal British Legion.

The RFO noted that the Museum Manager continues to have delegated spending powers and can use agreed budgets without recourse to this committee.

C7/25 **Community grants**

a. The committee considered the grant applications received as follows:

|                                                             | <b>Amount requested</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Abingdon Rugby Club                                         | £5,000                  |
| Friends of Abingdon Civic Society – Heritage Open Days 2025 | £1,800                  |
| One Planet Abingdon                                         | £5,000                  |
| Oxford Wood Recycling                                       | £5,000                  |
| Oxfordshire Foster Care Association                         | £1,000                  |

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It was **proposed** by Cllr Lonergan and **seconded** by Cllr Clover that the committee should only award a maximum of a quarter of the community grants budget to maintain a budget for further applications through the year and to award grants taking the scoring into account. The full amount requested should be awarded to Friends of Abingdon Civic Society and Oxfordshire Foster Care Association, with £550 for One Planet Abingdon and £2,700 to be shared between Abingdon Rugby Club and Oxford Wood Recycling. The total amount proposed was £8,750.

The committee noted that the grant application from One Planet Abingdon (OPA) was not well presented, with a significant hourly cost and a relatively low number of session users. It was noted that the town council had previously awarded a grant to OPA to support the engagement of a professional fundraiser. It was **proposed** By Cllr Gunarajah that the application from OPA be refused and the other applicants be awarded as much as possible within the limit proposed by Cllr Lonergan.

The Chair, Cllr Fawcett, supported the principle of only using a quarter of the grant at the meeting and agreed with the proposal to award the full amount requested to Friends of Abingdon Civic Society and Oxfordshire Foster Care Association.

The Town Clerk confirmed that the rugby club application fitted within Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding and the Chair **proposed** referring the rugby application to FGAM for consideration of CIL funding for a capital project. The rugby club application was considered to be a very positive project for which they were only asking for a small proportion from the town council.

The Oxford Wood Recycling scheme was very good, with only a small amount of the cost being requested.

It was **proposed** by the Chair, Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Clover and **RESOLVED** to award the full amount requested to Friends of Abingdon Civic Society, Oxford Wood Recycling and Oxfordshire Foster Care Association.

It was **proposed** by the Chair, Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Gunarajah and **RESOLVED** to refer the rugby club application to FGAM for consideration of CIL funding. The rugby club application was welcomed as it is intended to draw in other funding, which the town council grant would help to do.

It was **proposed** by the Chair, Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Gunarajah and **RESOLVED** to refuse the grant to One Planet Abingdon. A meeting with One Planet Abingdon would be considered.

| Applicant                             | Purpose of grant                                     | Grant agreed |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Abingdon Rugby Club                   | New changing facilities for women's and girls' rugby | £0           |
| Friends of Abingdon Civic Society (a) | Heritage Open Days 2025                              | £1,800       |

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| Applicant                               | Purpose of grant                            | Grant agreed  |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------|
| One Planet Abingdon                     | Cultural activities                         | £0            |
| Oxford Wood Recycling (b)               | Employability project for vulnerable people | £5,000        |
| Oxfordshire Foster Care Association (a) | Christmas party for children in care        | £1,000        |
|                                         | <b>Total:</b>                               | <b>£7,800</b> |

The above grants were made in pursuance of the council's powers, as noted in column one, as follows:

- (a) Local Government Act 1972, section 145: Provision of entertainments
- (b) Local Government Act 1972, section 137: Power of local authorities to incur expenditure for certain purposes not otherwise authorised.
- (c) Local Government and Rating Act 1997, part III, section 31: Crime prevention.
- (d) Local Government Act 1972, section 144: Power to encourage visitors and provide conference and other facilities.
- (e) Local Government Act 1972, section 142 (2A): Provision of information, etc., relating to matters affecting local government
- (f) Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976, section 19: Recreational facilities.
- (g) Local Government Act 1972, section 133: Provision of parish and community buildings.

b. The committee noted the information provided by grant recipients in the previous year:

- **Be Free Young Carers** – letter of thanks to the town council for £10,000 awarded as a large grant in the town council budget;
- **Friends of Abingdon Civic Society** – report on Heritage Open Days 2024 - £1,700 awarded June 2024;
- **Home Start Southern Oxfordshire** – report on activities in the past year - £2,000 awarded June 2024;
- **Our Lady and St Edmund's** – report on Warm Spaces 2024 - £700 awarded October 2024;
- **Peachcroft Christmas Lunch** – report on Christmas lunch - £2,000 awarded October 2024;
- **Racial Equality Group** – report on theatrical production - £500 awarded June 2024.

The reports were noted and the Chair asked for it to be noted that material exists in the reports for future Town Criers.

- c. The committee noted that the founding trustee of Abingdon Damascus Youth Project (ADYP), Rita Atkinson, will stand down from her role this year. The town council has supported ADYP for many years. The Chair asked if the Mayor could write to Ms Atkinson to thank her for all her hard work on this project, particularly in South Abingdon.

## C8/25 **Museum sub-committee**

The draft minutes from the museum sub-committee meeting on 28 May 2025 were noted.

## C9/25 **Events calendar**

### Events Calendar

The Project Manager: Business and Community Engagement (PMBCE) advised the committee that the events calendar follows the previous year. The first fundraiser for the Mayor has been moved forward to September from December.

Officers were requested to add Swan Upping to the calendar and for the Mayor to be involved if possible. The next scheduled Swan Upping event is 13 July.

A Diwali event may be being planned by a local group but currently has not been.

The PMBCE would meet with the Mayor to discuss plans for the year.

### Fun and Music in the Park

The event plan was shared and it was noted that some aspects remain to be finalised, including daytime activities. A number of clubs and societies would be joining the daytime events and holding activities for visitors. Just over 400 tickets had been sold to date, more than double the number from last year. The 'earlybird' price seems to have been successful and councillors noted how successful online advertising had been this year.

A first operations meeting had been held to run through logistics. There is currently no need for councillors to volunteer but help is always welcome. A card machine will be available on the main gate and the Waitrose gate will be open to ticket holders. The main gate for entry will be where payments will be taken. Wristbands will be offered to be given out in advance. Further meetings will be planned to ensure a smooth event.

Officers were asked to ensure that posters are taken down very soon after the event takes place to avoid unnecessary clutter in the town.

Feedback collection will be planned and a QR code for online comments was recommended.

The committee thanked the PMBCE for her work on the event.

## C10/25 **Report on Clubs and Societies Day**

The committee considered a report on Clubs and Societies Day from Cllr Penny Clover. PC proposed this as an annual event and for resources to be committed to this. There was support from a number of attending groups for this.

There were concerns about the staff commitment required to organise and run the event. The PMBCE noted that she has been working on events since starting at the town council and this has impacted other work, such as business engagement. There may be a need for Councillors to review the role. The Town Clerk noted that the business engagement role has not started and a new role may need to be considered if the number of events envisaged is supported. There may be a role for a local events organiser to take this on.

It was **proposed** by the Chair, Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Halliday and **RESOLVED** to ask the PMBCE to bring a report to the next meeting with options for Clubs and Societies Day in future. It was suggested that participants could be asked for their preference for future events.

The committee was advised that the uptake for Fun and Music in the Park was lower from clubs and societies due to their involvement in the earlier Clubs and Societies Day.

The Chair thanked Cllr Clover for her report and officers for their work to make the day successful.

## C11/25 **Communications review**

The committee considered a report from the Project Manager: Business and Community Engagement on what had already been done and next steps.

The PMBCE outlined her role and estimated that 1.5 days a week is focused on communications. The town council's presence had grown since the new officer role was created, with significant additional followers on social media. Many residents do not use social media regularly so it would be useful to advertise social media and the website in the Town Crier.

The website needs a lot of work and a new one is being considered. There are around 70 subscribers to the website newsletter, which is automatically generated. Officers were asked to bring a proposal for a new website to the next meeting.

The internal newsletter for staff and councillors was welcomed.

The PMBCE mentioned raising the profile of councillors on social media and suggested videos for local items of interest. A regular video update from the town council could be considered.

The Chair thanked the PMBCE for her work and commented on the noticeable increase in presence.

#### C12/25 **Report of Project Manager: Place and Property**

The committee considered a report on options for the refurbishment of the ceremonial chairs in the Guildhall Historic Rooms and the Michaelmas Fair. There are 30 chairs so the cost is considerable.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Clover and **seconded** by Cllr Lonergan that the town council chooses the highest quality leather and seeks a quote for refurbishment of the wood where needed. It was suggested that Oxford Wood Recycling could be approached to do this. This proposal would be recommended to FGAM so the Town Clerk could identify a budget line.

It was noted that some chairs had the town crest on the backs. This could be considered in future for refurbishment. The Project Manager was asked to prepare an inventory of chairs with this in mind.

##### Fair meeting

Councillors are needed to attend a meeting with the fair organisers. The Project Manager would confirm the date.

#### C13/25 **To review the forward plan**

The forward plan was reviewed.

Town Crier – officers were asked to send the PDF to councillors when it is available.

#### C14/25 **To review the actions register**

The actions register was reviewed.

Cylindrical noticeboard – the Cemeteries and Outdoor Services Manager advised that this is not needed and asked for it to be removed.

C15/25 **Future Agenda items**

- Report on website
- Report on clubs and societies day
- Report on accessibility audit for November
- Communications working party (C43/23 and C21/24) – Cllr training on Comms.

C16/25 **Dates of future meetings**

10 September 2025  
19 November 2025  
18 February 2026  
10 June 2026

The meeting closed at 8.45pm

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_