



Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

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Cherie Carruthers, Town Clerk/Chief Executive

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Finance, Governance and Asset Management committee

Monday 16 June 2025

Minutes

Present

Cllr Jim Halliday	Chair
Cllr Elio Astone	Vice-Chair
Cllr Neil Fawcett	Chair of the Community committee
Cllr Mark Giddins	Chair of the Planning committee
Cllr Gwyneth Lewis	Chair of the Personnel sub-committee

In attendance:

Cherie Carruthers	Town Clerk/Chief Executive
Andy Crick	Democratic Services Officer (clerk to the meeting)
Victoria Moore	Project Manager: Property and Place

SECTION I (open to the public, including the press)

F1/25 Apologies

The Mayor, Cllr Rawda Jehanli; Cllr Gabby Barody; Cllr Oliver Forder

F2/25 Declarations of interest

None.

F3/25 Public participation

None.

F4/25 **Terms of reference**

The committee noted the terms of reference for this committee.

F5/25 **Minutes**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Astone, **seconded** by Cllr Fawcett and **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance, Governance and Asset Management committee of 3 March 2025 be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting, to be signed by the Chair.

F6/25 **Finance report**

- i. It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Lewis and **RESOLVED** to accept the management accounts and associated reports to 30 April 2025.
- ii. It was **proposed** by Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Halliday and **RESOLVED** to accept the closing management accounts and associated reports to 31 March 2025.
- iii. It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Giddins and **RESOLVED** to receive and note the final Internal Audit Report for 2024-25

Actions and comments

- **Appendix A**: Training for Mayor and deputy. The Town Clerk was asked to check with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor on whether they are receiving this training and whether they consider it to be good value. It was suggested that annual training for all Chairs and Deputies in managing meetings would be better value. The Town Clerk was asked to produce a confidential report on training options for Mayors and councillors.
- **Appendix D**: full council management accounts to 31 March 2025.
- The Town Clerk had projected an underspend of circa £156,547 at the 16 December 2024 FGAM meeting, the closing balance was an overspend of £415,848, offset by use of £359,816 from EMR's, resulting in a closing end-of-year balance of £56,032 overspend.

The Town Clerk highlighted the following explanations for the overspend:

- Energy costs were considerable due to a period when the council had been out of contract and was renegotiating an agreement, The meter reads against charge are also under dispute with the provider.
- The staffing budget was overspent at the end of the year.
- The significant unplanned costs arising from the discovery of RAAC and asbestos in Abbey Hall and the required remedial works, to make the building

safe, was the primary cause of the overall council overspend.

The overspend amounted to 121% of planned expenditure, offset by Earmarked Reserves (EMRs). The Town Clerk noted that the council had closed the past two financial years with an underspend of £100,000 plus.

The Town Clerk was asked to provide a report on the energy charges for the last financial year, including details of queries raised with the energy company.

Re Earmarked Reserves, Cllr Fawcett raised a community grant application, received by the Community Committee from Abingdon Rugby Club which meets the criteria to be paid by Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding and advised the committee that this would be referred to a future meeting for determination.

It was **proposed** by the Chair, Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Fawcett and **RESOLVED** to agree, in principle, to award the grant application using CIL funding, and to consider the matter formally at the next meeting of this committee once it had been listed on the meeting agenda.

The Town Clerk was asked to write to the Rugby Club to advise them that the funding request would be formally considered at the next meeting of FGAM but had been approved in principle.

F7/25 **Strategic risk register approval and corporate risk management policy**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Lewis, **seconded** by Cllr Giddins and **RESOLVED** to approve the strategic risk register and to adopt the corporate risk management policy.

F8/25 **Bank signatories**

The committee was asked to appoint signatories to the bank mandate in accordance with the financial regulations adopted at the town council meeting on 12 May 2025, item 7.1. It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Astone and **RESOLVED** that the list of signatures would be the members present of this committee:

Cllr Elio Astone
Cllr Neil Fawcett
Cllr Mark Giddins
Cllr Jim Halliday
Cllr Gwyneth Lewis

It was noted that Cllr Lonergan and Cllr Skinner are currently signatories. Cllr Skinner has asked that he be removed as a signatory.

F9/25 **Internal audit review**

The committee received a report from the Town Clerk on the effectiveness of the internal audit. The Town Clerk had sought alternative quotes for audit services (as reported to the Committee) and recommended that the Council continue to use the current auditor, Auditing Solutions. It was **proposed** by Cllr Giddins, **seconded** by Cllr Lewis and **RESOLVED** to accept the recommendation of the Town Clerk to **approve** and **appoint** Auditing Solutions Ltd as Internal Auditor for Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council for the next four years.

F10/25 **Properties update**

The committee received a report from the Project Manager: Property and Place.

Shelving in cells

The committee considered the options presented and officers asked to find additional quotes to allow for an informed decision to be made. It was noted that shelving needs to be installed as soon as possible to allow the strong room to be emptied. It was therefore agreed to delegate to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chair and the Project Manager: Property and Place the task of placing a contract to install appropriate shelving.

Refurbishment of chairs

The Community committee had referred this proposal to FGAM to ask it to find a budget for the work. Officers suggested using the civic treasures budget and were also asked to refurbish three of the leather-backed chairs with the other chairs. It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Fawcett and **RESOLVED** to delegate to officers to refurbish up to 25 chairs using budget EMR334.

F11/25 **Local government review**

The committee considered what actions the town council should take given the impending local government reorganisation. The committee was asked to consider setting up a task and finish working party to examine proposals relating to county and district council responsibilities and assets. The town council should identify areas where it may benefit Abingdon from the town council taking on more areas of responsibility, avoiding potential liabilities.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Giddins and **RESOLVED** to set up a task and finish working party to look at this. The Town Clerk supported a suggestion that the Committee should appoint Councillors who are not on either the District or County councils. The committee agreed to appoint the present four members, excluding Cllr Fawcett, who sits on the district and county councils.

F12/25 **Draft emergency plan**

The committee considered a report and draft emergency plan prepared by the Deputy Town Clerk. The Deputy Town Clerk was thanked for her work on the draft plan, which was commended by the committee. It was **proposed** by Cllr Astone, **seconded** by Cllr Lewis and **RECOMMENDED** to the town council that the draft emergency plan be adopted.

If approved by town council, it will be important to inform residents so that they are aware who to contact in emergencies.

F13/25 **Publicity**

Items which may be publicised:

- chapel refurbishment and availability for hire
- rugby club grant

F14/25 **Forward plan**

The forward plan was noted.

F15/25 **Actions Register**

The actions register was noted.

Energy audit: Cllr Halliday and Cllr Astone would consult with the Project Manager: Property and Place to identify areas for attention to attempt to address the council's net zero commitment, identifying the current situation and actions which may be taken. A report would be prepared for the next meeting of the committee.

F16/25 **Future Agenda items**

- Equality and diversity policy
- Green energy: to consider options for adding green energy generation on town council buildings, such as the depot and cemetery office. Item referred from Environment, Amenities and Infrastructure Committee as responsibility sits with this committee.

F17/25 **Dates of future meetings**

15 September 2025
1 December 2025
2 March 2026
15 June 2026

F18/25 **Exclusion of the public, including the Press**

The Chair **moved**, Cllr Fawcett **seconded** and it was **RESOLVED** that in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted as summarised below. The meeting then moved into confidential session.

F19/25 **Property matters**

The committee received a verbal update from the Town Clerk on a property matter related to the Guildhall Historic Rooms. A confidential appendix to these minutes is available for councillors to view.

F20/25 **Property – property sale**

The committee considered a report from the Project Manager: Property and Place on a property matter. A confidential appendix to these minutes is available for councillors to view.

F21/25 **Property – community asset**

The committee considered a report from the Town Clerk on a property matter related to a community asset. A confidential appendix to these minutes is available for councillors to view.

The meeting closed at 8.55pm.

Signed: _____

Date: _____