



Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

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ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

Wednesday 25 June 2025

Minutes

Present:

Cllr Rawda Jehanli
Cllr Elio Astone
Cllr Neil Fawcett
Cllr Mark Giddins
Cllr Jim Halliday
Cllr Pat Lonergan
Cllr Lorraine Oates
Cllr Andrew Skinner
Cllr Victoria Walker

Mayor

In attendance:

Cherie Carruthers
Andy Crick

Town Clerk/Chief Executive
Democratic Services Officer (clerk to the meeting)

One member of the public

Act of Reflection

The opening reflection was led by Revd Georgina Bondzi-Simpson.

T18/25 Public participation

None.

T19/25 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Gabby Barody, Cllr Cheryl Briggs, Cllr Penny Clover, Cllr Margaret Crick, Cllr Oliver Forder, Cllr Tom Greenaway, Cllr Murali Gunarajah, Cllr Gwyneth Lewis, Cllr Leo Midwinter and Cllr Colin Sanderson.

T20/25 **Declarations of interest**

None.

T21/25 **Minutes**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Giddins, **seconded** by Cllr Halliday and **RESOLVED** to adopt and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2025 as a correct record of the meeting.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Giddins, **seconded** by Cllr Halliday and **RESOLVED** to adopt and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2025 as a correct record of the meeting.

T22/25 **Mayor's engagements**

A report on the Mayor's engagements was reviewed by the meeting. The Mayor commented that the number of engagements was tiring but it was great fun meeting a range of people from all over Abingdon. The Mayor in particular mentioned meeting with people with dementia and understanding the challenges they faced.

The Deputy Mayor noted the range of events he had attended and the people who worked to make the town what it is.

The Mayor provided additional information about the Mayor's chain and one of the original sponsors of the chain, John Creemer Clarke.

T23/25 **Oxfordshire County Council**

Cllr Neil Fawcett provided a verbal update of key issues at the county council:

- The county council has launched a consultation on traffic mitigation in central Oxford and the views of residents are welcome. The ongoing closure of Botley Road makes traffic in the mediaeval city centre extremely high and the great majority of visitors to Oxford do not use cars.
- Surveys of residents have identified strong support for addressing climate change, which reflects the priorities of the political party currently in control.
- Work on the A34 Lodge Hill interchange in north Abingdon has commenced.

- Provision of services for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) will be discussed at the next meeting of the county council. SEND service provision is a national crisis.
- The government has extended the period in which councils can run high deficits, although there are still no plans to resolve this.
- Abingdon County Councillors met with county council officers to discuss potential new controlled parking zones in the town centre between Ock Street and Albert Park, the Harwell Estate off Bath Street and the town centre end of Oxford Road. Further areas will be consulted on in due course.
- County council officers are now in the detailed planning stage for an update to the junction of Bridge Street, High Street and Stert Street. A public consultation is expected in the autumn.
- County councillors have been looking into the large number of roadworks in north Abingdon and officers are taking action on this, including imposing fines on contractors where necessary.

The Mayor thanked Cllr Fawcett for his report and commended the work of county councillors. Cllr Halliday asked if Cllr Fawcett could report back to county officers to thank them for the quick work undertaken to resolve the recent sink hole in Bridge Street. Cllr Fawcett replied that he would be pleased to do so.

T24/25 Vale of White Horse District Council

A written report was provided by Cllr Oliver Forder. Cllr Giddins mentioned the frustration of councillors on the slow progress of the north Abingdon development. A planned meeting with developers will not take place until September. Councillors discussed grass cutting on new estates which was often not carried out with much care and attention and expressed a need for services to be provided fairly to all residents. The report was noted.

T25/25 Environment, Amenities and Infrastructure committee

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2025 were received and Cllr Astone, who had chaired the meeting, provided a summary of the meeting. Cllr Astone noted the poor state of the surfaces around the bus shelters, which he noted is not the responsibility of the town council but the relevant landowner.

Cllr Giddins noted that County Councillor Nathan Ley has obtained some funding for a new bus shelter near Langley Road which is currently being installed by the county council. Councillors were recommended to seek a commuted sum from the county council with any newly installed bus shelter to help fund the town council's ongoing role maintaining them once installed.

T26/25 **Community committee**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2025 were received. The Chair, Cllr Fawcett, noted that the grant application from Abingdon Rugby Club had been referred to the Finance, Governance and Asset Management committee for consideration of supporting it using Community Infrastructure Levy funds. Cllr Fawcett commented on planning for Fun and Music in the Park and the recent Clubs and Societies Day and noted that the new staffing post was showing very positive results. JH thanked officers for preparing the recent Town Crier publication and noted the plans for future issues and that PDFs of each edition are published on the town council website.

T27/25 **Finance, Governance and Asset Management committee**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2025 were received. The Chair, Cllr Halliday, noted that the grant application from Abingdon Rugby Club had been approved. The committee had considered bank signatories and confirmed their names. It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Lonergan and **RESOLVED** to retain Cllr Pat Lonergan as a bank signatory.

Future plans for local government reorganisation were considered and a working party appointed.

Recommendations

F12/25 – Emergency plan: it was **RECOMMENDED** to the town council that the emergency plan be adopted. Cllr Astone complimented officers for their work on this. It was **proposed** by Cllr Astone, **seconded** by Cllr Lonergan and **RESOLVED** to adopt the emergency plan.

T28/25 **Planning committee**

The minutes of the meetings held on 17 March 2025, 7 April 2025, 28 April 2025 and the draft minutes of the meeting on 19 May 2025 were received.

The Chair, Cllr Mark Giddins, noted the ongoing contact between the town council and DEFRA with regard to the proposed new strategic reservoir to the south west of Abingdon and the need to include Abingdon in future planning for this. Consultation on the proposed new strategic reservoir to the south west of Abingdon will begin in October 2025 and everyone was encouraged to contribute.

The issue of new developments affecting school rolls was considered and a planned new school may not be built until 2028 or 2029. It was noted that school rolls have fallen slightly so there is less pressure than anticipated.

T29/25 **To Approve and Sign the Annual Governance and Accountability Report (AGAR) 2024-25**

- i) It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Astone and **RESOLVED** to approve and sign section 1 of the Annual Accountability and Governance Report 2024-25.
- ii) It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Astone and **RESOLVED** to approve and sign Section 2 of the Annual Accountability and Governance Report 2024-25.

T30/25 **Standing orders**

Draft proposed standing orders were presented to the town council for consideration. These were based on model standing orders prepared by the National Association of Local Councils, amended to be Abingdon-specific. It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Oates and **RESOLVED** to adopt the new standing orders for the town council.

T31/25 **Domestic abuse charter**

Cllr Gwyneth Lewis has been working alongside Reducing the Risk to make Abingdon a 'torchbearer' town on addressing domestic abuse. If the town council adopts the draft charter it would be the first town in the UK to do so.

Some amendments are needed to the draft charter, in particular to the background factual information to ensure that it is accurate. Reducing the Risk would like the town council to adopt the draft charter in principle in advance of the formal launch, planned to take place on 26 July 2025.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Walker and **RESOLVED** to adopt the draft domestic abuse charter and to delegate responsibility for the final wording of the Charter and the supporting information to the Town Clerk in consultation with Cllr Lewis.

T32/25 **Motions under standing order 8**

The following motion was **proposed** by Cllr Jim Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Lonergan and **RESOLVED**:

'Abingdon Town Council notes that the well-used footpath over the Abingdon weir is currently closed, and that this is causing much inconvenience to many local people who use the footpath, in particular to visitors and residents whose boats are moored in the vicinity of Abingdon Lock, as well as to walkers using the "Thames Path National Trail".

'The Council asks the Town Clerk to write to the Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, Philip Duffy, (cc Layla Moran MP) asking for both an update about the closure, including the reason for it and the timetable of works to remedy any faults, and that this information is also prominently displayed at each end of the closed section.'

T33/25 **Future agenda items**

None.

T34/25 **Dates of future meetings**

1 October 2025
14 January 2026
8 March 2026
Monday 18 May 2026
24 June 2026

Cllr Skinner asked for a Google calendar of town council meetings to be set up. Cllr Halliday advised that one had been set up for members of the majority political party and officers would share the internal town council Google calendar.

T35/25 **Exclusion of the public, including the Press**

The Chair **moved**, Cllr Halliday **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 moved into confidential session.

T36/25 **Confidential appendix to minutes**

The confidential appendix to the draft minutes of the extraordinary town council meeting on 27 May 2025 was noted.

The meeting closed at 8pm

Signed: _____

Date: _____