



## Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Royse Court Offices, Bridge Street, Abingdon, OX14 3HU

Cherie Carruthers – Town Clerk/Chief Executive

Telephone: 01235 522642

Email: [enquiries@abingdon.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@abingdon.gov.uk)

Website: [www.abingdon.gov.uk](http://www.abingdon.gov.uk)

# ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

Wednesday 14 January 2026

**These are draft minutes, subject to the approval of the town council and they may therefore change.**

Present:

Cllr Rawda Jehanli	Mayor
Cllr Elio Astone	
Cllr Penny Clover	
Cllr Neil Fawcett	
Cllr Oliver Forder	
Cllr Mark Giddins	
Cllr Tom Greenaway	
Cllr Jim Halliday	
Cllr Gwyneth Lewis	
Cllr Pat Lonergan	
Cllr Leo Midwinter	
Cllr Lorraine Oates	
Cllr Colin Sanderson	
Cllr Andrew Skinner	Deputy Mayor

In attendance:

Cherie Carruthers	Town Clerk/CEO (Clerk to the Meeting)
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### **Act of Reflection**

The meeting was opened with an act of reflection led by Reverend Georgina Bondzi-Simpson.

T50/25 **Public participation**

None.

T51/25 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Murali Gunarajah, Cllr Gabby Barody, and Cllr Margaret Crick.

T52/25 **Declarations of interest**

None.

T53/25 **Minutes**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Forder, **seconded** by Cllr Lewis and **RESOLVED** to adopt and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 1 October 2025 as a correct record of the meeting.

T54/25 **Mayor's engagements**

The Mayor thanked the Deputy Mayor and the Past Mayor, Cllr Barody, for attending events on her behalf. Recent events included the Over 75s' Christmas Party, Kensington and Chelsea Carol Service and a tree planting initiative. The Mayor recorded special thanks to the students at John Mason School who had welcomed guests at the Christmas Party and provided a choir.

T55/25 **Oxfordshire County Council**

Cllr Tom Greenaway provided a verbal update of key issues at the County Council: -

- Early data from the temporary Oxford congestion charge indicated positive impacts in some areas, including increased use of park and ride facilities.
- The county council is monitoring potential traffic displacement and will publish further data.
- A booking system will be introduced for waste recycling centres, partly to manage disruption during the Redbridge facility upgrades closure and to align Oxfordshire with neighbouring authorities.

**Draft minutes, subject to the approval of the committee and may therefore change**

- The council clarified that recent funding announcements assume a funding boost, this is based on a maximum council tax increase being levied and do not represent new central government funding. True reflection being a £14 million reduction over 3 years.

The report was noted.

**T56/25 Vale of White Horse District Council**

Cllr Oliver Forder provided a verbal update of key issues at the District Council:

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- The joint Local Plan inspection has stalled due to failure to meet the condition to cooperate and consult with neighbouring authorities.
- Guidance has been issued by the Monitoring Officer regarding limitations on asset transfers ahead of local government reorganisation.
- A £100,000 loan to the Abbey Buildings Trust was approved by the district council.
- Developer forums for North Abingdon are scheduled for February.

A discussion followed on issues including bridge maintenance closures, Upper Reaches, and recent rent pressures affecting community services. It was noted that an agreement had been reached securing the continued operation of the Oxfordshire Mind Abingdon Hub.

The report was noted with an action for Cllr Forder to forward on the Monitoring Officers guidance on asset transfers.

**T57/25 Environment, Amenities and Infrastructure Committee**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2025 were received. Cllr Astone, who had chaired the meeting, provided a summary of the meeting which included

- Progress towards adding an electric vehicle to the council fleet.
- Positive feedback on riverbank clean-up works and installation of new play and fitness facilities.
- Reports of offensive graffiti under the Stratton Way underpass.
- A budget allocation for a future playground refurbishment was noted.
- A life cycling programme for bus shelter maintenance was in progress

**T58/25 Community committee**

Cllr Fawcett presented the draft minutes of the Community Committee held on 19 November 2025. Matters that had been discussed were:

- Fun and Music in the Park: There was initial pushback from the district council on using Abbey Gardens for the event due to its heritage status. The council remains hopeful and will continue to press for the event to go forward in that location.
- Clubs and Societies' Day: Plans for the event are progressing well, and the booking list is nearly full. Council members were encouraged to participate and to have the council itself host a table to engage with the public and local organizations.
- Grant Funding: The committee agreed to continue providing large grants to several key local organisations, including Abingdon Carousel Family Centre, Citizens Advice Oxfordshire and TAB. Funding was also approved for One Planet Abingdon to support their fundraising efforts.
- Business Engagement: The committee discussed improving engagement with local businesses. Cllr Forder inquired about the progress on updating the terms of reference for this work.
- Cllr Lewis reported progress on the initiative for Abingdon to become a "Town of Sanctuary." The project involves significant work, and support was requested from the council to move it forward, particularly in partnership with "Host Abingdon."

**T59/25 Finance, Governance and Asset Management committee**

Cllr Halliday presented the draft minutes of the Finance, Governance and Asset Management Committee, held on 1 December 2025.

The council discussed Appendix B of the financial report, noting that no budgets were brought forward or vired between cost centres for the current year. The use of EMRs (Earmarked Reserves) was clarified as a method to balance overspend or underspend on the I&E report, rather than for raising new funds.

Changes to the budget for 2026-27 included the following: -

- Carbon Reduction and Building Refurbishment - the council plans to refurbish the old sash windows in the council building over two years to

improve energy efficiency. The installation of photovoltaic panels and a battery on the roof of the depot in the cemetery to power electric vehicles is also being investigated.

- Grant Funding: £200,000 will be granted to the Abbey Buildings Trust, over a 4 year period, drawing £50,000 per annum.
- Abingdon Against Domestic Abuse Initiative: £25,000 is allocated to a project to reduce domestic abuse, which will fund a project manager for three years and aims to become self-sustaining through larger donors.
- Museum Project: £20,000 is budgeted for a digital development project for the museum.
- A typo was identified in the fees document for the lease of ashes vaults, which will be corrected before publishing.

The following items were formally proposed, seconded, and approved by vote:

- i. Fees and charges will increase by 4% to align with inflation with an amendment, was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, and **seconded** by Cllr Astone. All members were in favour. It was therefore **RESOLVED** to adopt the fees and charges for 2026-27 with the amendment.
- ii. 2026-27 budget – Gross expenditure budget of £2,479,122 was **proposed** by Cllr Gunarajah and **seconded** by Cllr Halliday. All were in favour. It was therefore **RESOLVED** that the budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year as presented be adopted.
- iii. Precept for the 2026-27 financial year. Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council will levy a precept of £2,175,940 for the 2026-27 fiscal year, this being a £168.33 per house per annum charge and a 4.73% increase on the 2025-26 levy.

	2025-26	2026-27
<b>Precept</b>	£ 2,064,136	<b>£ 2,175,940</b>
<b>Tax Base (Band D)</b>	12,842.3	<b>12,926.7</b>
<b>Charge p/h p/a</b>	£ 160.73	<b>£ 168.33</b>
<b>£ Inc p/h p/annum</b>		<b>£ 7.60</b>
<b>% Increase</b>	4.94% inc from 2024-24	<b>4.73%</b>
<b>To Be Taken from CIL or reserves</b>		

This was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday and **seconded** by Cllr Astone. All were in Favour. It was **RESOLVED** that the 2026 -27 precept as presented be **approved**.

#### T60/25 **Planning committee**

Cllr Giddins, Committee Chair provided an update on recent matters from the draft minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2025, including:

- Withdrawal of a Radley Road development application following concerns raised regarding access arrangements.
- Feedback submitted on Cycle Route 5 proposals.
- An increase in Houses in Multiple Occupation applications.
- Progress on the Neighbourhood Plan, now being taken forward more directly by the town council.
- Ongoing concerns regarding delays to Oxford Road infrastructure works and enforcement of the Section 106 agreement.

#### T61/25 **Civility and Respect**

This item was deferred until the next meeting.

#### T62/25 **Councillor Vacancy**

The council noted that the seat formerly held by Cllr Cheryl Briggs is now vacant under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 and recorded its thanks for her service.

#### T63/25 **Future agenda items**

- Report from Abingdon PCSOs.
- Confidential report on the chairs and tables licencing on the marketplace.

T64/25 **Dates of future meetings**

18 March 2026

Monday 18 May 2026 (Annual Town Council / Mayor Making)

24 June 2026

T65/25 **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.

T66/25 **Asset Matters**

The Chair of Planning and Town Clerk updated the members on a town council asset matter. The update was noted. A confidential appendix to these minutes is available for councillors to view.

The meeting closed at 8:58pm

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

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