



Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

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ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

Wednesday 18 March 2026

Present:

Cllr Rawda Jehanli	Mayor
Cllr Elio Astone	
Cllr Gabby Barody	
Cllr Penny Clover	
Cllr Neil Fawcett	
Cllr Mark Giddins	
Cllr Tom Greenaway	
Cllr Murali Gunarajah	
Cllr Jim Halliday	
Cllr Gwyneth Lewis	
Cllr Pat Lonergan	
Cllr Leo Midwinter	
Cllr Lorraine Oates	
Cllr Colin Sanderson	
Cllr Victoria Walker	

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.

T67/25 **Public participation**

None.

T68/25 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Andrew Skinner, Cllr Oliver Forder, Cllr Margaret Crick, and Cllr Carol Dunne

T69/25 **Declarations of interest**

None.

T70/25 **Minutes**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Clover and **RESOLVED** to adopt and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2026 as a correct record of the meeting.

T71/25 **Mayor's engagements**

Noted.

T72/25 **Oxfordshire County Council**

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

- Oxfordshire County Council has set its budget for the coming year.
- The Redbridge waste booking system is operational and functioning effectively with no increase in fly tipping.
- Lodge Hill junction works are progressing as planned.
- The congestion charge is expected to generate approximately £4 million surplus, to be reinvested in the county's transport system.
- Approximately £4.5 million is being invested in drainage improvements to reduce pothole formation.

The report was noted.

T73/25 **Vale of White Horse District Council**

Cllr Neil Fawcett reported no new updates.

T74/25 **Community committee**

Cllr Fawcett presented the draft minutes of the Community Committee held on 18 February 2026.

Matters that had been discussed were:

- Bryan Brown from the Friends of Abingdon Civic Society had addressed the committee with regards to support for developing a Heritage and Cultural Strategy aligned with the UK Town and Culture Competition. A working party has been established.
- Community Grants: the full annual budget has been allocated following agreement.
- Positive reports and interest for Clubs and Societies Day; also positive reports on the preparation and ticket sales for Fun and Music in the Park, with preparations and ticket sales well ahead of last year's event.

Museum Sub Committee update by Cllr Clover:

- A five-year plan is being developed.

Cultural Strategy Sub-Committee updated by Cllr Lewis:

- A meeting had taken place last week and officers are working on an Expression of Interest submission for the Town of Culture awards.
- The sub-committee is considering fundraising for Friends of Abingdon Civic Society and other organisations.
- Work is ongoing for building listings and future plans for "Discover Abingdon".

The report was noted.

T75/25 **Environment, Amenities and Infrastructure Committee**

Cllr Gabby Barody presented the draft minutes of the Environment, Amenities and Infrastructure Committee held on 9 February 2026 meeting:

- A continued great partnership with our co-opted member, Lucille Savin, from Carbon Cutters
- Development of a new/updated single-use plastics policy is underway, working alongside officer Victoria Moore, Project Manager for Property & Place.
- Victoria Moore has carried out a very good audit of the Market Place which indicated reduced plastic usage. Cllr Barody thanked her for this.
- The Public Art working party is now focused on fundraising for improved signage.
- The Biodiversity Competition has been relaunched for schools, colleges, and community groups. Applicants can submit entries through a QR code or advertised email address.

The report was noted.

T76/25 Finance, Governance and Asset Management Committee

Cllr Halliday presented the draft minutes of the Finance, Governance and Asset Management Committee, held on 2 March 2026.

He reported:

£110,000 of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding had been spent:

- £5,000 Abingdon Rugby Club (ladies' changing rooms)
- £30,000 Abbey Buildings Trust
- £25,000 Play area improvements
- £50,000 Climbing frames and climbing units in the play areas

£26,000 in CIL had been received, giving a current balance of £64,000. £20,000 has been committed to the Abbey Buildings Trust, leaving a balance of £44,000 available for the 2026-27 year.

The internal audit report has been returned with no issues.

A new investment strategy has been adopted, with particular thanks going to Cllr Astone who worked with the Town Clerk to develop a sound strategy.

Energy efficiency measures have been undertaken:

- Window repairs and double glazing underway
- Solar panels have been approved in principle for the depot

- LED lighting upgrades are under consideration for the Old Magistrate Court

A productive meeting had been held with the Vale of White Horse District Council regarding future governance and collaboration. Cllr Halliday, Cllr Astone and the Town Clerk had been in attendance.

The Town Council wants to work with new unitary authorities but would prefer to work with similar councils of our size, ie large towns which have a very similar set of issues as Abingdon.

The report was noted.

T77/25 **Planning Committee**

Councillors received the minutes of the meetings held on 12 January 2025, 2 February 2025 and 23 February 2025.

Cllr Giddins, Committee Chair, provided an update on recent matters:

- Ongoing review of planning decision inconsistencies
- Continued engagement with health authorities regarding future infrastructure
- North Abingdon developments progressing with transport and access improvements
- Concerns raised regarding deviations from outline planning permissions.
- Continued consultation responses submitted.

i) Recommendations

The government is running a consultation giving residents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to have a say in the changes to local councils.

- *Please follow this [link](#) to the consultation.*
- *The consultation ends on 26 March 2026.*

*It is **RECOMMENDED** that this consultation goes to Full Council, and the council responds to the consultation.*

A long discussion took place with each member voicing their view; it concluded that the Council acknowledged the strengths of the Two Oxfordshire model, it considers, on balance, but not unanimously, the one Council "One

Oxfordshire" proposal to be the most appropriate option. It also emphasises the importance of strong local decision-making structures, including area planning committees and enhanced devolution to town and parish councils, and the council unanimously urge decision-makers NOT to select the three council model which includes a *Greater Oxford Council*.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Astone and **RESOLVED** that the council responds to this consultation. The Town Clerk to write a draft response and circulate to all councillors for comment three days before the official deadline which is the 26 March 2026.

T78/25 **Civility and Respect**

Members received a report for Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council to sign up to the NALC Civility and Respect pledge, with the following appendices:

- Dignity at Work Policy
- Member / Officer Protocol

It was **proposed** by Cllr Lewis, **seconded** by Cllr Halliday and **RESOLVED** that the policies be adopted subject to the minor amendments being done.

T79/25 **Election of Mayor**

Nominations were received from Members for the election of Mayor for the 2026-27 civic year

It was **proposed** by Cllr Lonergan, **seconded** by Cllr Gunarajah and **RESOLVED** that Cllr Andrew Skinner be nominated as Mayor for the 2026-27 civic year.

T80/25 **Election of Deputy Mayor**

Nominations were received from Members for the election of Deputy Mayor for the 2026-27 civic year

It was **proposed** by Cllr Lonergan, **seconded** by Cllr Giddins and **RESOLVED** that Cllr Victoria Walker be nominated as Deputy Mayor for the 2026-27 civic year.

T81/25 **Draft meeting calendar**

Members received and considered the draft calendar of meetings for 2026-27.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Giddins and **RESOLVED** that the draft calendar of meetings be approved for 2026-27, with thanks going to officer Jo Blackmore for all the work she has done to ensure meetings did not clash with District or County meetings.

T82/25 **Election of Councillor for Abbey Ward at By-Election**

Carol Dunne was the successful candidate.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday **seconded** by Cllr Lewis and **RESOLVED** that Cllr Carol Dunne be assigned membership of the following council committee and sub-committees:

- Community Committee
- Museum Sub-Committee
- Personnel Sub-Committee (until 18 May)

T83/25 **Future agenda items**

- Governance document review and policies annual review.

T84/25 **Dates of future meetings**

Monday 18 May 2026 Annual Town Council Meeting at 6pm; followed by the Annual Mayor Making Civic event.

T85/25 **Exclusion of the public, including the Press**

The Chair **moved**, Cllr Astone **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.

A confidential appendix to these minutes is available for councillors to view.

T86/25 **Chairs and Tables Licensing**

Members received and considered a confidential report on the chairs and tables licensing on the Market Place. The report was noted.

T87/25 **Motions under Standing Order 8**

Members received and considered a confidential motion, main point detailed below, on a Mayoral matter proposed by the Mayor, Cllr Rawda Jehanli. It was **RESOLVED** that the confidential motion be approved and the following award be recognised.

Proposer: The Mayor, Cllr Rawda Jehanli. Seconder: Cllr Elio Astone.

Mayor's Local Business & Community Award to recognise a local business that has made an exceptional contribution to Abingdon and its community during the Mayoral year.

The award would be:

- **A formal signed certificate** presented by the Mayor
- **No financial award** would be attached

The award would recognise a business that has demonstrated:

- Outstanding community support; or
- Exceptional charitable or voluntary contribution; or
- Long-standing commitment to the town; or
- A special action that has made a real difference

Number of Awards

There would normally be **one award per year**, with the option of a second award only in a truly exceptional year.

Decision Process

The award would be made at the **Mayor's discretion**, informed by:

- Recommendations from councillors
Input from the proposed Business Forum (once established), and/or an established Charity/NGO (No-Governmental-Organisation) which is active within Abingdon
- Evidence of genuine community benefit This approach ensures the award:
 - Remains fair and transparent
 - Avoids repetition or dilution
 - Is non-political
 - Focuses on community impact rather than business size or profit

Key Principle

These awards are not about profit or size of business. They are about kindness, service, and commitment to Abingdon

T88/25 **Asset Matters**

Members received and a verbal update on a confidential asset matter from the Chair of Planning Committee. The update was noted.

The meeting closed at 8.33pm

Signed: _____

Date: _____