



Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

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Community Committee Wednesday 10th June 2026 Minutes

These are draft minutes, subject to the approval of the committee and they may therefore change

Present:

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

Chair
Vice-Chair

Cllr Andrew Skinner

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

In attendance:

Cherie Carruthers
Lizzie Martin
Dave Butterworth
Steve Rich
Katy Williams & Jess Osbourne
Avril Williams
Mr Will Speke

Town Clerk/Chief Executive
Project Manager: Community & Business Engagement
Abingdon Healthfest
Abingdon Town Band
One Planet Abingdon
30th Abingdon Scout Group
Headteacher, Fitzharry's School

SECTION I - open to the public including the Press

C1/26 **Apologies**

There were no apologies for absence.

C2/26 **Declarations of interest**

Cllr Carol Dunne declared a pecuniary interest in item 7 (a(viii)) as she is employed by One Planet Abingdon and item 7 (b(ii)) as she was Chair of the Trustees of Be Free Young Carers.

Cllr Dunne will leave the meeting during discussions on this item.

Cllr's Jim Halliday and Penny Clover declared an interest in item 7 (a(ix)) as they are both life members of The Friends of Abingdon.

Cllr Victoria Walker declared an interest in item 7(a(ii)) as her son attends Fitzharrys School.

C3/26 **Terms of Reference**

The terms of reference as presented were noted. It was **proposed** by Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Gunarajah and **RESOLVED** to accept the committee terms of reference.

C4/26 **Statements and Questions from the Public**

Dave Butterworth - Abingdon Healthfest

Dave Butterworth spoke on behalf of Healthy Abingdon's request for financial support towards Healthfest. The organization received £1,050 from Abingdon Council over the last two years for health fairs but has also raised £4,600 from other sources for various projects.

Funds have been used for projects like setting up a junior parkrun and creating a website section detailing Abingdon's green spaces.

Katy Williams – One Planet Abingdon

Katy Williams addressed the Council in support of the grant application from One Planet Abingdon. A previous £4,800 grant had enabled them to unlock an additional £20,000 from the National Lottery for a part-time volunteer coordinator.

The new funding would support submitting large bids to the National Lottery to extend the volunteer coordinator post and fund new staff to expand activities.

Key activities like sewing and cooking classes were highly successful with long waiting lists, and the goal was to make them self-sustaining.

The requested amount included £1,000 to compensate a team member for one day a month to manage the significant time commitment working with Orchard Funding.

The current request was intended to be the final one for fundraising support, as future costs are planned to be incorporated into larger bids.

Steve Rich – Abingdon Town Band

Steve Rich spoke on behalf of Abingdon Town Band in support of their grant application for funding for a display board and new music.

The band lost a third of its membership after COVID-19 due to a long rehearsal hiatus, and paid engagements had decreased, reducing income.

The cost of a set of music had risen from around £54 to over £100 since COVID-19.

The band had started an "oompah band" to play at local breweries and pubs as a new income source.

Most of the band's current funds are allocated to replacing their deteriorating band room.

Avril Williams - 30th Abingdon Scout Group

Avril Williams provided information about the grant application from the 30th Abingdon Scout Group, which would enable the group to update cooking equipment for safety and portability.

The request covered new gas stoves with a safety cut-off feature, campfire grills for safer open-fire cooking (especially for six-year-old members), updated gas piping, a flask for hot water, and a cold-water container.

The equipment was also loaned to other local groups, including the 18–25-year-old scouts.

Fundraising efforts had included other applications (some still underway), jumble sales, and Gift Aid. A recent technology grant was secured from the Nuclear Decommissioning Body. The group is an 80-year-old registered charity submitting annual accounts to the Charity Commission.

Cllr Clover recommended applying to the Co-op Community Fund; Avril William confirmed this has been done.

Mr Will Speke (Headteacher) – Fitzharry's School

Will Speke, Head Teacher of Fitzharry's School and a trustee of the Fitzharris School Association (FSA), presented a funding request.

The FSA, a registered charity, supported school projects not covered by the school budget.

The primary project was to resurface outdoor courts used for tennis and netball, with an estimated total cost of £80,000.

The court surface had deteriorated significantly, impacting nearly 1,000 students and the wider community (including Haberdashers' Comets netball, basketball groups, and holiday clubs).

The project required full funding to be secured before work can begin and could not be done in stages.

C5/26 **Minutes**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Clover and **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Community Committee of 18 February 2026 be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting, to be signed by the Chair.

C6/26 **Finance Report**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Gunarajah and **RESOLVED** that the management accounts to 30 April 2026 be approved.

The finance report was noted as sparse, being for the first month of the financial period.

As of 30 April 2026, the committee's expenditure is £171,204, with committed spend of £41,313 (29.4% of budget). Income is £8,231 (8.2% of budget).

An update was provided on Christmas lights: the contract with the installers had been renewed for four years. Lights in the Roysse Court area had been changed for December 2026 and were noted as within budget.

C7/26 **Community grants**

- a) Total grant requests for this meeting amount to £21,380.94, approximately two-thirds of the £30,000 annual budget.

A resubmitted grant application from the Dialogue Society Oxford for £4,500 was unanimously rejected, as it was felt not to offer good value for money and was not fully within the town council's remit.

There was a short debate between members on how grants should be determined. It was decided that each should be considered in its own merits rather than applying a mathematical formula to distribute a quarter of the budget.

The following requests had been received: -

	Amount requested
Healthy Abingdon	£750
Fitzharry's School Association	£5,000
Abingdon Town Band	£915

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Abingdon Vale Swim Club	£500
Abingdon Concert Band	£600
Dialogue Society Oxford	£4,500
30 th Abingdon Scout Group	£525.94
One Planet Abingdon	£6,040
Friends of Abingdon Civic Society	£2550

It was **proposed** by the Chair, Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Lonergan and **RESOLVED** to award the following grants at the requested amount; Healthy Abingdon, Abingdon Town Band, Abingdon Vale Swim Club, Abingdon Concert Band, 30th Abingdon Scout Group.

It was **proposed** by the Chair, Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Dune and **RESOLVED** to refer the Fitzharry's School Association's application to FGAM, for possibly award via the Community Infrastructure Levy funds.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Clover, **seconded** by Cllr Lonergan and **RESOLVED** to award the full grant for The Friends of Abingdon.

Cllr Dunne left the room

Following a long discussion, it was **proposed** by the Chair, Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Halliday and **RESOLVED**, agreed with a vote of six in favour and one against to award One Planet Abingdon the full grant applied for.

Cllr Dunne returned to the room

Applicant	Purpose of grant	Grant requested	Grant agreed
Healthy Abingdon (a)	Health festival	£750	£750
Fitzharrys School Association (b)	Hard court reconstruction	£5,000	Agreed to refer to FGAM for possible CIL funding
Abingdon Town Band (a)	Display Board and Oktoberfest Music	£915	£915
Abingdon Vale Swim Club (b)	Purchase video equipment to improve feedback to swimmers and aid safeguarding	£500	£500
Abingdon Concert Band (a)	Purchase of logo polo shirts	£600	£600

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Applicant	Purpose of grant	Grant requested	Grant agreed
Dialogue Society Oxford	Enable running of presentations to schools to promote British Values and EDI amongst students.	£4,500	Resubmission of previous application. No award.
30 th Abingdon Scout Group (b)	Upgrade cooking equipment	£525.94	£525.94
One Planet Abingdon (OPA) (a)	Use of Orchard Funding to help source new grants and Coordinator post.	£6,040	£6,040 Agreed with a vote of 6 in favour and one against
Friends of Abingdon (b)	To fund Heritage Open Days	£2,550	£2,550

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

- (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.

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- b) Members received and considered impact report updates from previous grant recipients One Planet Abingdon and Be Free Young Carers.

These were noted.

C8/26 Museum sub-committee

Cllr Penny Clover verbally updated on key points following the sub-committee meeting of the 3 June 2026.

- Visitor numbers were increasing and KPIs are positive.

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- The Zip Tap (hot tap system) would not be replaced in the Café due to high cost and lack of perceived need.
- The Museum Manager was waiting for a full list of fossils for the Jurassic exhibit, and he was requested to prepare an outline legal agreement.
- A quote of £4,200 from Orchard Fundraising was received for research related to the Jurassic display, which was within budget.
- The committee is working on a five-year plan, considering options such as increasing visitor numbers, reviewing roof visit charges (currently £2), reviewing staffing needs and opening hours, and potentially hiring a specialist for the Jurassic exhibit.
- The Little Basement Museum was now open on Thursdays.
- The Abingdon Museum Friends AGM was scheduled for June 11, 2026, at 2:00 PM in the Kempster Room.
- Members also discussed the proposed museum lift, and they were keen to progress this.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Clover, **seconded** by Cllr Lonergan and **RESOLVED** that the Museum Manager should prepare and submit outline planning applications for two lift options using existing drawings, with a budget of approximately £400 from the museum's cost centre, to test the planning system and obtain a decision in principle from conservation teams.

C9/26 **Website**

The Project Manager: Business and Community Engagement presented a report on the progress of the new website. The brief was due to be completed by the end of September 2026. The museum portion has been separated out, as the museum wanted to manage its own website; the historical society will be included with the museum's website.

A suggestion was made to have a trial site for stakeholders (staff, councillors, select residents) to test in August 2026 before the public launch.

The project includes staff training covering editing, backend structure, and creating new pages.

The report was noted.

C10/26 **2026-27 Event Calendar**

The committee considered a report from the Project Manager: Business and Community Engagement. The event calendar for the year was reviewed and found to be very clear, and members were impressed that she had mapped out the entire year.

A suggestion was made to send a printed or PDF copy of the calendar to all councillors, which would be done. The marketplace has additional events that came in too late to be included in the current calendar version.

Item 13 was taken at this point in the meeting.

Cllr Skinner **proposed** the following motion to the Committee, which was **seconded** by Cllr Fawcett.

This Proposal is for to approve a project to a set up a day where Abingdon organisations looking for volunteers (usually to help them deliver services to the community,) can present their opportunities and requirements.

A pilot is suggested for September this year. Only Council-owned venues will be used (Magistrates' Court and Roysse Room).

Budget will be approximately £500 for publicity and refreshments on the day. The success of the event will be judged by the number of Organisations taking up a place, and to a lesser degree (as it is a pilot), by the number of potential volunteers attracted.

Subsequently organisations will also be asked whether they were successful in recruiting, whether they would sign up for another event in June '27 (in national volunteering week), and whether they would be prepared to subsidise the event. It may also be worthwhile to involve the larger companies in Abingdon who look for opportunities for their staff to volunteer in the community.

If the Committee approves the proposal the chair will ask the Chief Clerk for officer time to set up and manage the event and also ask for a Committee member to lead the project.

Members **RESOLVED** to approve the motion and that Cllrs Dunne and Clover would assist Cllr Skinner on details of the event.

C11/26 **Clubs and Societies Day**

The Committee received and considered the report on the recently held Clubs and Societies Day. It had been a success with positive feedback received.

Based on feedback, suggestions for the next event included:

- Engage an events partner again to assist with insurance and provide a designated first aider.
- Increase the budget to cover a movable first aider as the event is expected to grow.
- Change hours to 10:30am to 2:30pm to allow more setup time and capture more foot traffic.

Areas that required improvement were: -

- Some organisations were found to be selling products/services, which is not permitted and should be monitored.
- Limited participation from diverse ethnic organisations; outreach assistance offered by Cllr Gunarajah.
- Space felt cramped for groups wanting to do demonstrations.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Fawcett and **RESOLVED** to retain the same format for 2027 and to recommend an increase in the budget by £500 for 2027/28 budget cycle.

C12/26 **Fun and Music in the Park**

The Committee received and considered an update on the Fun and Music in the Park event, along with the event plan.

The event had been scheduled for next year and the current year's organisation was on track.

617 tickets had been sold so far vs. 490 at the same time last year; in-person sales via the Visitor Information Centre had not yet been included in the figure.

It was noted that weather may affect demand.

Timetable and crowd management:

In the daytime, the main stage would end at 2:30pm with a campus stage bridging the gap via Make Music Abingdon, until the evening with local performers.

A "beer garden" area near Loose Cannon would use hired outdoor furniture from Oxford Wood Recycling.

Controlled areas would be fenced with security with overflow to areas near the sound tent.

Wristband distribution would begin around 5:00pm – wristbands would allow staying in Abbey Gardens; without wristbands, attendees should leave at 5:00pm.

Coordination with Oxford Security was required as it would be the first-time trial for this format.

Advertising and promotion was well underway in print, digital and media formats.

Relevant businesses and churches had been informed of planned road closures and resident leaflets planned approximately 10 days before the event, with signage installed around the same time.

Key staff/volunteers were requested to arrive by 4:50pm for 5:00pm wristband distribution.

The update was noted.

C13/26 **Motions to Committee**

Taken at C10/26

C14/26 **To review the forward plan**

The Committee noted the current forward plan.

C15/26 **To review the actions register**

The actions register was reviewed.

C16/26 **Future Agenda items**

- Review grants policy
- Discuss the Museum's 5-year plan.

C17/26 **Dates of future meetings**

16th September 2026
2nd December 2026
3rd March 2027
9th June 2027

The meeting closed at 8.53pm

Signed: _____

Date: _____