



Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

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Finance, Governance and Asset Management Committee

Monday 15th June 2026

Minutes

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

Present

Cllr Jim Halliday	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 Officer
Victoria Moore	Project Manager: Property and Place

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

F1/26 **Apologies**

Apologies for their absence were received from the Mayor Cllr Skinner, Cllr Elio Astone, Cllr Gabby Barody and Cllr Oliver Forder.

F2/26 **Declarations of interest**

None.

F3/26 **Terms of reference**

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

F4/26 **Public participation**

None.

F5/26 **Minutes**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Giddins and **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Finance, Governance and Asset Management committee of 2nd March 2026 be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting, to be signed by the Chair.

F6/26 **Finance report**

The Committee received and considered a finance report from the RFO, along with lists of payments and accounts.

- i. It was **proposed** by Cllr Giddins, **seconded** by Cllr Lewis and **RESOLVED** to accept the list of payments made between 1 February 2026 and 31 April 2026. Members queried a payment of £2,040 made to A&C Oxford, for a new door. The Town Clerk/RFO explained that this had been for a new exterior PVC door for the cemetery toilet, which had to be completely replaced due to an emergency access issue.
It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Lewis and **RESOLVED** to accept the committee management accounts on the balances as at 30th April 2026
It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Lewis and **RESOLVED** to accept the summary committee accounts as at 30 April 2026.

The Chair asked if the Abbey Cinema was up to date with payments and the Town Clerk confirmed that they have paid all recharges from last year; they would be billed at the end of June for quarter one of the new financial year.

- ii. It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Giddins and **RESOLVED** to accept full council management accounts on the closing balances as at 31 March 2026 and the summary council committee balances accounts as at 31 March 2026.
It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Fawcett and **RESOLVED** to accept the balance sheet and earmarked reserves as at 31 March 2026.

- iii. The Final Internal Audit Report for 2025-26 was **noted**. It was recorded that the internal auditor had found no faults. The committee wished to record thanks to staff for thorough governance and procedures.

F7/26 **Strategic risk register approval and corporate risk management policy**

The committee deferred the strategic risk register and corporate risk management to the next meeting, and these would be brought back in the new format with updated details. It was noted that actions from last year appeared again and needed checking for completion.

F8/26 **Properties update**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Project Manager: Property and Place.

Windows and Glazing

The windows in the Old Magistrates Court had been completed; secondary glazing installation was delayed due to manufacturer issues, but the Committee was assured it would be completed before the end of July.

Thicker glazing was upgraded to 8 mm in the Council Chamber and the Bear Room; secondary glazing had been installed in the Abbey room; draft excluders, new hinges, handles, brackets, and windowsills had also been installed.

The project exceeded the budget by £6,440 due to window conditions, significant hidden deterioration was discovered after sanding and deeper inspection. The officer had assessed the spend as necessary and not wasteful.

A stress crack had been identified in one of the new windowpanes in the Bear Room. The contractor would inspect and rectify this, along with checking the other new windows, at no extra cost when they return.

The project overrun was noted, and the overspend coming in at approximately 10% of the original quote and considered within a normal contingency amount.

Lighting Options for Magistrates' Court

Three options were presented for upgrading the lighting to LED; planning permission was not required for any of the options.

Option 1: Like-for-like replacement

Replace every existing light fitting with a new, upgraded cream-colored LED unit to maintain the current appearance.

Option 2: Partial replacement

Same as Option 1, but only half of the lights would be replaced (those on one side of the central beam). However, this would leave holes in the ceiling that would require a separate contract to fill and paint.

Option 3: Modern LED ceiling panels

Remove all original fittings and install new ceiling panels with built-in LED lights between the main structural beams. This would modernise the room, improve aesthetics for conference use, offer better insulation, allow future upgrades like surround sound; and adjustable light intensity settings.

Members considered the juxtaposition of modern elements with the existing old panelling and visible beams; it was felt that the large beams must remain visible, and the ceiling should be recessed relative to the beams rather than flush but acknowledged that it would future proof the room for events and conferencing moving forward. It was noted that the proposal included loose-laid 100 mm insulation above the ceiling. The Committee discussed any thermal benefits but agreed that the soundproofing effect would be advantageous due to noise transfer between floors.

Members raised questions about heat generation from LED systems and any transformers/drivers requiring minimum ceiling clearances. The lead officer would need to confirm heat calculations and standards, and the installation must include dropping existing emergency lights, smoke detector, and Wi-Fi equipment to the new ceiling level within the quote; a minor works certificate would be issued on completion.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Giddins and **RESOLVED** to agree in principle to option 3, subject to further checks by the lead officer, including if a transformer unit was needed and heat calculations and standards.

Solar Panel Project at the Cemetery Depot

The Committee discussed two quotes.

Contractor 1: 7.44 kWp; this was missing annual kWh and battery details.

Contractor 2: 11.2 kWp, 9,162 kWh/year, 10 kW inverter, EP12 heated battery, 10-year workmanship warranty.

Both included battery linkage and overhead cable from the depot to the office to avoid trenching.

There would be a need for an inverter, and more information would be needed on this and whether the battery capacity was the same for both quotes.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday and **seconded** by Cllr Lewis and **RESOLVED** to approve the project in principle, with the final contractor decision delegated to the Town Clerk, Project Manager: Property and Place, along with the Chair, Cllr Halliday, the Vice Chair, Cllr Astone and Cllr Giddins pending complete technical specs.

Schedule 1: Closing Schedule of Works 2025/26 & Schedule 2: Current Works 2026/27

Members received and considered financial information on the past year's works and current year's works.

A missing "paid to date" entry for 14 Spring Gardens led to incorrect figures in last year's schedule of works; £8,356 was paid but omitted. After correction, the last financial year exceeded budget by £1,940.17.

Current year position (F26–27) had started with the full revenue budget at £81,600, with no minus figure brought forward, as last year's accounts have been closed.

An expected final invoice of £6,440 from Oxford Window Company was pending, as detailed above.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Giddins and **RESOLVED** that the overspend for 14 Spring Gardens to be taken from general reserves in 2025–26; and the windows overspend would be covered by general reserves in 2026–27.

Interior painting and decor enhancements

The Project Manager: Property and Place was requested to obtain quotes for painting walls in the Old Magistrates Court once lighting is installed; suggested colours included magnolia or off-white. Members were also interested in the idea of hanging suitable paintings and pictures and suggested that the Honorary Archivist may be able to offer advice on these.

F9/26 **Local government review**

The committee received and considered a verbal update on the LGR from the Town Clerk/CEO. There was not much to update on, the Town Clerk's outreach to the Vale for costings had returned West Berkshire's figures. It was hoped that the final decision on which option was selected would be announced before Parliament's summer break commencing on 16 July 2026.

The tentative timeline was transition late 2026 to March 2028; shadow elections 6 May 2027; vesting day April 2028 (to be confirmed).

Constraints included: no sale or transfer of buildings/assets during this phase; legal powers and ownership transfer after shadow elections; discussions could continue, formal decisions post-May 2027.

It was agreed to convene a working group meeting before September's committee meeting and draft a briefing note.

F10/26 **Publicity**

Items which may be publicised (when complete):

- Improvements to lighting in the OMC;
- PV panels in the cemetery

- Christmas lights update

F11/26 **Forward plan**

The forward plan was noted.

F12/26 **Actions Register**

The actions register was noted.

A report would be prepared for the next meeting of the committee on the Burgess Trust and funding Twinning opportunities for young people.

The Town Clerk/CEO advised that a bid would be going in for a grant towards the war memorial restoration, and members requested that the Project Manager; Property & Place summarise the amount of gas / electricity used for the past 3 years in the Councils properties.

It was noted that wedding chairs had not been purchased but the first wedding in the Roysse Room was taking place at the weekend. Members looked forward to feedback on this.

F13/26 **Future Agenda items**

- Equality and diversity policy

F14/26 **Dates of future meetings**

21 September 2026
14 December 2026
8 March 2027
21 June 2027

F15/26 **Exclusion of the public, including the Press**

The Chair **moved**, Cllr Giddins **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.

F16/26 **Property matters**

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

F17/26 **Property – community asset**

The committee received a verbal update 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 8.34pm.

Signed: _____

Date: _____