



## Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

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# Community Committee Wednesday 18 February 2026, 7pm Old Magistrates' Court Minutes

### Present:

Cllr Neil Fawcett	Chair
Cllr Penny Clover	Vice-Chair
Cllr Pat Lonergan	
Cllr Andrew Skinner	
Cllr Victoria Walker	
Cllr Rawda Jehanli	Mayor

### In attendance:

Cherie Carruthers	Town Clerk/Chief Executive
Lizzie Martin	Project Manager: Business and Community Engagement.

5 members of the public

## **SECTION I - open to the public including the Press**

### C49/25 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Jim Halliday and Cllr Murali Gunarajah.

### C50/25 **Declarations of interest**

Regarding item C55/25:

Cllr Clover declared previous volunteer involvement with the charity ARCh, noting no current conflict of interest.

Cllr Walker declared past volunteer involvement with the Atom Society and Atom Festival (not current).

Both items were noted and deemed not to constitute conflicts of interest.

## C51/25 **Statements and Questions from the Public**

### Friends of Abingdon Abbey Buildings Trust

Bryan Brown, Chair of Friends of Abingdon Abbey Buildings Trust addressed the committee regarding heritage and cultural development in the town.

The key points noted:

- Proposals to raise the profile of heritage and culture were welcomed.
- He emphasised Abingdon's unique heritage assets, including its historic buildings and county town status.
- Lessons from previous initiatives, eg Choose Abingdon Partnership, Portas application, were highlighted.
- Mr Brown stressed the need for a clear and distinct town identity.

Abbey Buildings Update:

- £5.4 million project
- £4 million pledged by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, which was conditional on raising £1.4 million.
- Fundraising target was almost achieved.
- Local appeal has raised approximately £60,000
- The project was anticipated to start mid-year.

The Chair thanked BB for his longstanding contribution.

### Life Space Project

Jessica Farrell, Creative Director & Founder of Life Styling / The Life Space Project spoke in relation to the grant application.

JF presented the "Moments of Joy" initiative under the Life Space Project.

Key points noted from the presentation:

- The project delivered inclusive, sustainable creative programmes.
- It reached 500–900 residents across Abingdon.
- Included intergenerational and climate-focused initiatives.
- Works in schools, care settings, and community spaces.

- Emphasised sustainability and reuse.
- Funding sources included SNG, Vale of White Horse Climate Action Fund, and OCPA.

Councillors raised questions regarding fundraising capacity and project sustainability.

Jess confirmed that partial funding from the Council would still allow the project to proceed at a reduced scale.

The Chair thanked JF for her presentation.

### C52/25 **Minutes**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Lonergan and **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Community Committee of 19 November 2025 be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting, to be signed by the Chair.

*Item 11 was taken at this point of the meeting.*

### C53/25 **Heritage & Cultural**

Members considered a report from Lizzie Martin, the Project Manager: Business and Community Engagement.

Cllr Forder addressed the committee and expressed strong support for the heritage and cultural initiative and praised the officer report.

LM outlined the proposal to engage Orchard Fundraising to support the Expression of Interest for the UK Town Of Culture Competition, deadline for EOI 30.3.26.

The Town Clerk confirmed that funding was available from existing consultancy budget to cover Orchard fundraising fees

Proposed Working Party Members were:

Cllr Oliver Forder; Cllr Jim Halliday; Cllr Lorraine Oates; Cllr Gwyneth Lewis, and Cllr Penny Clover

It was **proposed** by Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Lonergan and **RESOLVED** that:

- The engagement with Orchard Fundraising (funded from existing consultancy budget) be approved.
- A Heritage Working Party be established.
- To proceed with branding and cultural development work.

### C54/25 **Finance Report**

The committee considered a report from the RFO on the management accounts for the period ending 31 December 2025 which included

- committee management accounts as at 31 December 2025;
- summary committee management accounts as at 31 December 2025;
- noting the annual PCSO contract amount for 2026-27.

The Town Clerk / RFO confirmed that £7,540 remained in the Community Grants budget. £5,000 of the recorded spend was offset by the use of CIL used to cover a previous grant application. The total available was £12,540

It was **proposed** by Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Skinner and **RESOLVED** to accept management accounts

It was **proposed** by Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Skinner and **RESOLVED** to accept the summary management accounts.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Skinner and **RESOLVED** to note the annual PCSO contract amount for 2026-27.

## C55/25 Community grants

a. The committee considered the community grant applications received individually.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Clover, **seconded** by Neil Fawcett and **RESOLVED** to approve grants in full as shown below for:

- Abingdon Schools Librarians Group; ARCh; Atom Festival; Oxford Play Association and The Archway Foundation.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Lonergan and **RESOLVED** that the application for Dialogue Society Oxford be declined.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Lonergan **seconded** by Cllr Walker and **RESOLVED** that partial grants be approved as shown below:

- Thames Ridge Scouts; Life Space Project; and Abingdon Drama Club

Applicant	Purpose of grant	Grant agreed
Abingdon Drama Club (b)	Clubhouse heating system	£2,840
Abingdon Schools Librarians Group (b)	Joint reading activities for secondary schools	£700

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Purpose of grant</b>	<b>Grant agreed</b>
Assisted Reading for Children (ARCh) (b)	Resources for volunteers (books and games)	£1,000
ATOM Festival (b)	March 2026 Festival	£1,250
Dialogue Society Oxford (b)	Life of a Chickpea – Abingdon Schools	Not approved
Life Space Project (b)	Moments of Joy project	£3,000
Oxford Play Association (b)	Play & Activity Days	£1,500
Thames Ridge Scouts (b)	Scouting activities & items	£250
The Archway Foundation (b)	1-1 support and social support groups	£2,000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£12,540</b>

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

- (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.

- b. The committee received updates from previous recipients of grants: Abingdon Health Fest; and South Abingdon Paly & Activity Day. Positive feedback was received and the reports were noted.

## **C56/25 Museum sub-committee**

The committee received the draft minutes from the museum sub-committee meeting on 4 February 2026.

Key points were:

- There was improved liaison between Museum staff and councillors
- Recognition that the Museum was approaching its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of it opening to the public.
- Work experience placements would prioritise Abingdon schools.

The report was noted.

## C57/25 **Website – Website Tender report**

The committee considered a report from the Project Manager: Business and Community Engagement.

It was proposed that Parish Council Websites be appointed for:

- Main council website rebuild
- Museum site
- Discover Abingdon site

Key considerations were:

- Compliance with accessibility standards
- Improved booking functionality
- Removal of outdated archived events
- Budget was within existing allocation

It was **proposed** by Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Lonergan and **RESOLVED** to award the tender to Parish Council Websites.

Parish Council Websites	£4800 Town Council site £1750 Museum site	ATC - £336.00 hosting and support Museum - £180.00 hosting and support  Total annual = £516.00
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## C58/25 **Clubs & Societies Day**

The committee considered a report from the Project Manager: Business and Community Engagement for Clubs & Societies Day.

Key points were:

The event was scheduled for Saturday 11 April 2026

70 + groups had registered interest.

Multiple venues were confirmed: Roysse Room; Old Magistrates' Court; Market Place; St Nicolas Church, with some activities being hosted by the Vale at the Charter.

The report was noted.

### C59/25 **Fun & Music in the Park 2026**

The committee considered a report from the Project Manager: Business and Community Engagement regarding updates on the event:

There had been strong early ticket sales (133 at the time of the update). This was more than last year as tickets had not been released at this stage of the year.

Bands had been confirmed

The report was noted.

### C60/25 **Twinning**

The committee considered a report from the Project Manager: Business and Community Engagement on the proposed budget and action plan for the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the town twinning in November 2026.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Fawcett, **seconded** by Cllr Clover and **RESOLVED** to approve the proposed plans and budget set out the report.

### C61/25 **To review the forward plan**

The forward plan was reviewed and noted.

### C62/25 **To review the actions register**

The actions register was reviewed and noted.

### C63/25 **Future Agenda items**

- Clubs & Societies Day – a write up report
- Fun and Music in the Park final planning report
- EOI Culture Awards update
- Dragon Boat Racing to be noted

C64/25 **Dates of future meetings**

10 June 2026

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.

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

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