



Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

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ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

Monday 22 June 2026

Minutes

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

Present:

Cllr Andrew Skinner
Cllr Gabby Barody
Cllr Penny Clover
Cllr Carol Dunne
Cllr Mark Giddins
Cllr Tom Greenaway
Cllr Murali Gunarajah
Cllr Jim Halliday
Cllr Rawda Jehanli
Cllr Gwyneth Lewis
Cllr Pat Lonergan
Cllr Leo Midwinter
Cllr Lorraine Oates
Cllr Andrew Skinner

Mayor

In attendance:

Cherie Carruthers

Town Clerk/Chief Executive

One member of the public

Act of Reflection

A minute's quiet reflection was observed by the meeting.

T12/26 **Public participation**

None.

T13/26 **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Elio Astone; Cllr Margaret Crick; Cllr Neil Fawcett; Cllr Oliver Forder and Cllr Victoria Walker.

T14/26 **Declarations of interest**

Cllr Gabby Barody declared an interest in item 10.ii regarding the grant application from Fitzharrys School Association as she is a member of the Abingdon Learning Trust. Cllr Barody did not take part in the discussion or vote.

T15/26 **Minutes**

It was **proposed** by Cllr Lewis, **seconded** by Cllr Midwinter and **RESOLVED** to adopt and sign the minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 12 May 2026 as a correct record.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Jim Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Barody and **RESOLVED** to adopt and sign the minutes of the Annual Town Council Meeting held on 18 May 2026, subject to the following amendments, as a correct record of the meeting:

Membership of Council Committees and Outside Bodies

- T9/26 Cllr Carol Dunne resigned from the Personnel Sub-Committee; and
- T9/26 Cllr Gwyneth Lewis would replace Cllr Margaret Crick as the Council representative to the Earth Trust during Cllr Crick's absence.

ACTION: officer to update the Earth Trust regarding our representative.

T16/26 **Mayor's engagements**

A report on the Mayor's engagements was reviewed by the meeting. The Mayor commented that engagements were continuing to increase and thanked members for their support.

T17/26 **Oxfordshire County Council**

A written report was provided by Cllr Neil Fawcett:

Local issues:

Lodge Hill: Cllr Neil Fawcett joined a site visit earlier today. Work is continuing at pace and the scheme remains on schedule to the current plan. There have been no major hold-ups, despite periods of challenging weather, and minor hold-ups have been successfully mitigated.

Peachcroft Roundabout: Cllrs Nathan Ley and Tom Greenaway have worked closely with district and town councillors to try and get the developers to come up with and stick to a realistic plan.

Work has now started and is progressing, but it is frustrating that it has ended up coinciding with the various closures linked to the Lodge Hill work.

Electric buses: More new electric buses are now serving Abingdon. Thanks to better reliability and shorter journey times, some additional routes are now using them, as well as the 35 route.

Radley Road lines: The Oxford Bus Company has reported that it has seen a noticeable improvement in reliability and journey times since the yellow lines were painted on the stretch of Radley Road near to the Vineyard junction/

Botley Road: Is still on track to reopen at the end of August. That is expected to lead to further improvements in bus journey times and reliability.

Rush Common School: Nathan and Tom met with council officers to discuss traffic around Rush Common School

Faringdon Road crossing & resurfacing: The new crossing on Faringdon Road, near Larkmead School, is now fully operational. The final timing tied in with a coincidental resurfacing scheme that was already scheduled and some improvements to the road marking when they were repainted.

County Council Business

Budget: The Cabinet has started to look at options for how to cut spending by the £24 million that is being cut from the County Council by the Government. To put that amount in perspective, it is about the same as the entire budget for the County's Library Service, or the annual budget of the Vale of White Horse District Council.

Fire and rescue: It was announced that the majority of plans will be dropped and the county will invest in reinvigorating the volunteer firefighting service. While it remains likely that changes will be needed in future, the consultation responses have provided useful feedback that will enable public views and, critically, ideas, to be proactively considered at an early stage.

Special Educational Needs: Oxfordshire's special educational needs improvement notice was lifted, reflecting progress in the service. While we clearly

aren't there yet, we're pleased that things are going in the right direction and that progress has been recognised.

County Hall: with the sale of County Hall meaning we will be moving out by the end of the year, temporary office space has been secured at Midland House, West Way, Botley.

EV Chargers: 1,500 new public EV chargers are to be installed across Oxfordshire thanks to £4 million of funding from central government.

East West Rail: the final consultation for East West Rail is ongoing – you can find out more at: eastwestrail.co.uk/news/latest-stories/east-west-rail-announces-details-of-final-consultation

The report was noted.

Cllr Tom Greenaway also clarified that the £24 million spending reduction would disproportionately impact discretionary services, as the majority of County Council expenditure is directed towards statutory services, particularly social care and special educational needs provision. Cllr Greenaway also explained that changes to government funding formulas had removed some recognition of the additional costs associated with delivering services in rural areas, resulting in greater impact on counties such as Oxfordshire.

T18/26 **Vale of White Horse District Council**

A written report was provided by Cllr Oliver Forder:

I have attended regular meetings with the developers re the Oxford Road roundabout. While progress has been made, it would be idle to suggest the situation is satisfactory. The incompetence of the developer and a tardy reaction from officers has left residents with a completely unsatisfactory situation, and I intend to press for recognition of this fact at future meetings. While the residents on north Abingdon suffer, the developer continues to reap in profits.

On a more positive note, after 3 years of campaigning, I witnessed a fortnight ago the start of rectification work on the Chilton Close trash screen. I hope that residents in this area of north Abingdon will be able to sleep earlier when the next storm season arrives.

I was also pleased to be able to lobby successfully for a reasonable rent review for Oxfordshire Mind's Abingdon Hub, which ensures this vital resource will be saved.

The report was noted.

It was also confirmed at the meeting that a site visit had been arranged by District Councillors with County Council officers to discuss the provision of an additional safe crossing on Twelve Acre Drive, as near as possible to the entrance to

Peachcroft Farm, which they thought should have been in the original development plans.

T19/26 **Community committee**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2026 were received.

Vice-Chair, Cllr Penny Clover, stated that at the last meeting there were a considerable number of members of the public in attendance, particularly those whose grants were going to be assessed. At that meeting the grant request total amounted to £21,380.94, approximately two-thirds of the £30,000 annual budget. Members therefore had had to consider the grants seriously versus budget.

Small grants

- All smaller bids were approved in full, including Friends of Abingdon for Heritage Weekend and Healthy Abingdon Health Fest.

Larger grants

- Dialogue Society Oxford was deemed not an appropriate funding fit after obtaining further information from them.
- Fitzharrys School presented a £80,000 courts resurfacing project. A contribution request was referred to the Finance, Governance and Asset Management committee for CIL funding consideration to preserve funds for later in the year.

Events and Operations

- Clubs and Societies Day had been a success with positive feedback received. Next year's event therefore will run from 10.30am-2.30pm with a slightly increased budget.
- Fun and Music in the Park

This event will be taking place on Saturday (27 June) and had a comprehensive operations plan, including evacuation procedures.

Museum initiatives

The five-year plan was being reviewed, and it was felt that the lift access should be investigated again.

A £10 roof access fee was being proposed, with Friends of Abingdon receiving a corresponding benefit through membership to encourage sign-ups and repeat visits.

Entry to the Museum would otherwise remain free; the voucher would allow multiple returns annually.

The draft minutes were noted.

T20/26 **Environment, Amenities and Infrastructure committee**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2026 were received. Chair, Cllr Gabby Barody, updated members:

Parks and play areas

- The Outdoor Services Team was commended for the maintenance of the council's green areas and improvements to the play areas. Chilton Close will have a Ninja Trail installed, along with an adult gym. The gym will be designed in a compact square layout, which should be easier to use than the Box Hill version.

Cllr Barody proposed that the Mayor be invited to attend the opening of the new equipment and would be happy to escort him.

Single Use Plastics

- Progress is being made on the single use plastics policy and the Council is moving on to stage three of the project. This includes engagement with market traders to further reduce plastic use, avoid "bad plastics" and seek innovative alternatives; working collaboratively with officers.

Bus Shelters

- The replacement and improvement programme is ongoing throughout the town, with a new priority list. This will include the consideration of "green" shelters and panels that provide more shade and environmental benefits.

Safety Considerations

- A query was raised about deterring children from climbing on top of certain play equipment at Chilton Close. Potential mitigations (eg surface treatment of equipment) were noted.

Twinning Visit

- Red, white and blue decorations have been prepared for the August visit from delegates from the twin town of Argentan.

Active Travel Map

- Work is continuing with the update of this map. Students have reached out to assist and an officer will be locating the electronic files so they can be updated.

It was suggested that it might be worth linking in the Healthy Abingdon map which shows benches to sit and rest.

The draft minutes were noted.

T21/26 Finance, Governance and Asset Management committee

The Chair, Cllr Halliday, summarised the recent FGAM meeting as the draft minutes were not yet available.

Finance

- The Committee had reviewed year-end accounts and earmarked reserves.
- The internal audit report which checks all our processes had been received and there were no actions identified, which was extremely impressive.

Property Matters

- The Guildhall window refurbishment project was essentially finished. Double glazing had been installed where necessary or where appropriate. Where that was not possible, the glass had been made thicker and all the sash windows had been insulated with appropriate materials.

This had been done in a way that the council did not need listed building consent because the structure had not been altered.

The condition of some windows was considerably worse than anticipated, and it did cost an extra £6,000. However, the windows had not been updated for decades and it will save money in terms of energy consumption.

- The committee had also looked at two schemes to install photovoltaic panels at the Depot and Cemetery sites. Quotes had been received, however comparisons were complicated by differing panel counts and capacities. Decision making had been delegated to the Town Clerk, the Leader and two councillors before the next meeting.
- Three quotes had been obtained for installing new lights in the Old Magistrates' Court. Currently the council has 48 lights in the room, some of which do not work. The large beams going across will be kept, with panels infilling. Not all will be ceiling panels – they would be light panels which will have three types of illumination, either low, medium or high. The number of panels would be reduced from 48 to approximately 20. This will save energy

and the other advantage of doing it this way is the council will be able to insulate above the ceiling panels, which might reduce some heat loss. More importantly, it will insulate sound-wise between that room and the Council Chamber above.

It would also make the room a much more modern space, ideal for conferences and workshops. Again, the decision has been delegated and should expedite matters.

The update was noted.

Fitzharrys School

A grant application had been received from Fitzharrys School which was considered by members. The Town Clerk had confirmed there was sufficient CIL money for this request.

It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Lewis and **RESOLVED** that £5,000 be awarded from the CIL budget.

Cllr Barody abstained from the vote, having declared an interest as she was a member of the Abingdon Learning Trust.

T22/26 Planning committee

The minutes of the meetings held on 16 March 2026, 13 April 2026, 11 May 2026 and 1 June 2026 19 May 2026 were received.

Cllr Giddins updated members in relation to the minutes:

The Committee was monitoring potential increases in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and associated planning implications.

The Town Council had successfully objected to two “in principle” applications, one near Withington Court and another backing onto The Warren, which resulted in their refusal or withdrawal.

An agreement had been reached with Greene King for a more suitable heritage sign for the reopening of the White Horse pub. The new sign will feature an image of the Belvoir White Horse, replacing a modern, neon-style proposal.

There had been continued engagement with the County Council, District Council officers and developers regarding the Oxford Road roundabout development area. There had been concerns in delays in communications and publication of meeting minutes.

Temporary traffic lights had caused ongoing traffic management issues, and County Council officers had already raised concerns with contractors regarding traffic management performance. Further information regarding the overall programme of works remained outstanding.

The update was noted.

ACTIONS:

- The Town Clerk to formally write to the Vale of White Horse District Council to expedite the release of meeting minutes from February, which were needed for the Planning Committee's work.
- The Town Clerk write to the developer, to press for the release of the overall schedule of works.

T23/26 To Approve and Sign the Annual Governance and Accountability Report (AGAR) 2025-26

The Town Clerk advised members that:

Section 1 (Annual Governance Statement) confirmed the Council's governance arrangements and risk management procedures.

Section 2 (Accounting Statements) summarised the Council's financial position and closing balances.

The AGAR had been scrutinised through committee processes and reviewed by both internal and external auditors.

- i) It was **proposed** by Cllr Halliday, **seconded** by Cllr Lonergan and **RESOLVED** to approve and sign section 1 of the Annual Accountability and Governance Report 2025-26.
- ii) It was **proposed** by Cllr Barody, **seconded** by Cllr Giddins and **RESOLVED** to approve and sign Section 2 of the Annual Accountability and Governance Report 2025-26.

T24/26 Community Safety & Inclusion Working Party

Members reviewed membership of the working party; current membership was:

Councillors Jehanli, Astone, and Gunarajah, with the Mayor and Chair of FGAM Cllr Halliday, serving as ex officio members.

Cllr Gunarajah requested that one more member volunteer to be part of the working party. Cllr Dunne volunteered.

The first meeting will be held in person to establish the terms of reference. The draft terms of reference will then be circulated to all council members for set period for comments.

Cllr Lewis expressed concern about the working party's remit, and sought reassurance that it would not investigate individual cases, which was outside the council's powers. The Town Clerk emphasised that the agreed remit would not be to investigate any individual cases.

The membership was confirmed.

T25/26 Future agenda items

Governance document review and policies annual review.

Update from the Community and Safety Inclusion Working Party.

T26/26 Dates of future meetings

7 October 2026

20 January 2027

24 March 2027

Monday 17 May 2027 – Annual Town Council Meeting

The meeting closed at 7.50pm

Signed: _____

Date: _____