

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

The minutes of a meeting of the Amenities and Recreation Committee held in the Old Abbey House on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2012 at 7.00pm.

**Present:**

Councillor Marilyn Badcock	- Chairman
Councillor Andrew Todd	- Vice Chairman
Councillor Alice Badcock	
Councillor Samantha Bowring	
Councillor Jason Fiddaman	
Councillor Angela Lawrence	
Councilor Lesley Legge	

**In Attendance:**

Mr Stephen Rich	- Head of Service Delivery
Mr Timothy Badcock	- Cemetery and Works Supervisor
Mr Nigel Warner	- Town Clerk (for item A58 only)

A48 **Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from the Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames Councillor Monica Lovatt and Councillor Sandy Lovatt.

A49 **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Jason Fiddaman declared a pecuniary and non-personal interest in the Service Review item on the agenda as it concerned allotments and his family were members of their local allotment associations.

A50 **Statements and Questions from the Public**

District Councillor Dr Jim Halliday spoke to the Committee and requested that the Town Council re-instate a bench along Bath Street, which had been removed a few years ago but was popular especially with elderly residents walking to and from the town centre. The Chairman thanked Dr Halliday for his request and said it would be discussed later in the meeting.

A51 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

**Resolved:** *that the minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2012 be signed as a correct record by the Chairman subject to the following amendments being made:*

1. Councillor Lawrence's name to be added to minute A23 - Apologies for Absence.
2. Minute A33 include the wording "The Council agreed to support the Caldecott School tree planting by making a donation towards the purchase of trees".

A request was made that Councillors' names should be included on the minutes instead of referring to "a local Member". The meeting was informed that this was a convention that officers

had been instructed to follow when writing minutes. The Chairman said she would speak with the Town Clerk regarding this matter.

#### A52 **Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the Agenda**

- **A13 - MG Garden** – Members were informed that work had commenced on installing a hard standing area in the MG Garden for the MG Car Club to display their cars. Members were pleased to hear that the benches, bollards and picnic table manufactured from recycled plastic had been ordered.
- **A14 - Chilton Close Pathway** – Work had now been completed on the pathway leading from Chilton Close to Hendred Way.
- **A18 - Gate at Chaunterell Way** – The cattle grid entrances to Chaunterell Way and Caldecott play areas had now been installed and there had been no further reports of dogs in the enclosed play areas.
- **A32 – Cemetery and Works Supervisors Report** - A scheme for the landscaping of the new Garden of Remembrance was presented to the meeting with an estimated cost of £1,500 plus the cost of semi mature trees. A Pergola of green oak is also to be constructed in the Garden at an estimated cost of £1,370. It was **resolved** that the landscaping and Pergola go ahead within the estimates provided, for which provision had been made within the budget for cemetery improvements.
- **A34 – Erection of 10ft Fence at Chilton Close** – The Chairman and Head of Service Delivery had been to Chilton Close recreation ground to look at the request for installation of a 10ft fence to the rear of residences in Cherwell Close. It was considered that the distance between the football goal posts and the residences fences was sufficient enough not to cause a major problem. Therefore the installation of a fence would not be in the Town Council's interests at this present time.

A Member said that she was concerned that other local Members were not always liaising with one another regarding matters within the remit of the committee which overlapped between wards. She stated that it would be helpful if Members did liaise as appropriate.

**A41 – Jubilee Parks** – As previously reported the applications for Jubilee Parks has been approved and the legal work is proceeding. Members requested to be informed who was paying for the legal work; this would be reported to the next meeting.

#### A53 **Christmas Lights Working Group**

The Committee received the minutes of the Christmas Lights Working Group held on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2012 and Councillor Jeanette Halliday requested that her apologies be added to the minutes of that meeting.

The committee were informed that the Christmas Lights Working Group were looking to put solar powered Christmas trees around the Town this year sponsored by local businesses as well as on Abingdon Bridge, from within the budget set aside for Christmas lights.

A request was made for some of the Christmas Lights to be left on after the Christmas period to brighten up the town during the long winter nights. The Chairman said she would refer this back to the Christmas Lights Working Group.

It was **resolved** that the minutes of 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2012 be approved together with any recommendations contained therein.

A54 **Summer Events Working Group**

The Committee received the minutes of the Summer Events Working Group held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2012 and **resolved** to approve the recommendations therein.

A55 **Abingdon-on-Thames Fisheries**

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk and noted its contents. The Chairman said she was concerned about the small number of matches taking place on the Abingdon Fisheries and the consequential low income. The Chairman said this is a matter that could be looked at along with the report at a future meeting.

A56 **Abingdon in Bloom 2013**

Members were informed that the next meeting of the Abingdon in Bloom Sub Committee would take place on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2012. This meeting would discuss the 2013 flower displays and the following year's competition. Members were also informed that the Abingdon Carbon Cutters had also requested to meet the Sub Committee with regard to planting to sustain wildlife (bees, butterflies etc.).

A57 **Noticeboards and Street Furniture**

The Committee received the Report of the Head of Service Delivery and **resolved** that notice boards be purchased and replaced at The Guildhall (instead of Old Abbey House), Stratton Lodge, and Market Place. Regarding new noticeboards the Committee **resolved** to purchase and place new noticeboards at Margaret Brown Garden, Stratton Way and Ladygrove Paddock and the Wotton Road shops all subject to permissions being sought where necessary. The Committee said that consideration would be given to the Peachcroft and Northcourt areas in the following year. These resolutions were subject to successful budget bids for 2013 / 2014.

The Committee **resolved** to purchase a bench manufactured from recycled plastic for Bath Street as requested by Councillor James Halliday earlier in the meeting.

A58 **Budget Estimates 2013 /2014 and Financial Report**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above, as circulated with the agenda.

The Town Clerk presented a paper to the meeting detailing the revised budget estimates for 2012/13 and the proposed revenue estimates for 2013/13. The report set out the budgetary process which was being followed, including the budget parameters and the principle of zero-

based budgeting. As part of the process, a number of cost centres had been consolidated so remove cost centres which were no longer needed. He requested that the meeting discuss any capital or revenue project budget bids for inclusion in the 2013 / 2014 estimates.

The Chairman, Cllr Marilyn Badcock, proposed and it was seconded by Cllr Andrew Todd, that the following capital and revenue project bids be made for the financial year 2013 / 2014.

• Cemetery Improvements	£30,000
• Play Equipment	£20,000
• Town Council-owned Paths and Pavements	£6,500
• New Cemetery Fund	£75,000
• New and replacement Christmas Lights	£10,000
• Noticeboards/Street Furniture	£20,000
• Summer Events	£3,000

A Member asked that the Play Equipment budget be increased to £25,000 but the Committee felt that £20,000 was sufficient for the work required given that some expenditure was still to take place this financial year.

The Chairman, Cllr Marilyn Badcock, also proposed that a budget bid be made to the Council's pooled equipment fund for a batwing mower. It was **recommended to the Finance and General Purposes Committee** that such a mower be purchased; this is further detailed in the confidential appendix as it is subject to procurement.

The Chairman confirmed that the Noticeboard and Street Furniture budget included the entrance signage for the MG Garden.

It was noted that due to potential changes to the Council tax-base, resulting from the proposals in relation to the localisation of Council tax support, it was being proposed that the Council set its precept for 2013/14 in January 2013, rather than in December 2012 as originally intended. Therefore the final recommendations in relation to the Committee's budget would be made at the meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2013. It was noted that these recommendations would then be considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2013 and the budget agreed and the precept and Council Tax set by the Town Council at its meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

It was **resolved:**

1. That the report of the Town Clerk be received and adopted;
2. That the revised estimates for 2012/13 and the draft base revenue estimates for 2013/14 be taken forward for approval to the January meeting of this Committee, following which they would be recommended as part of this Committee's budget, to the Finance and General Purposes Committee;

and, by 5 votes in favour, 0 against and 2 abstentions:

3. That the capital and revenue project bids as detailed above be taken forward for approval to the January meeting of this Committee, following which they would be recommended as part of this Committee's budget, to the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

A59 **Cemetery and Works Supervisor's Report**

The Committee received and noted the report of the Cemetery and Works Supervisor.

The Committee thanked the works team for the work they had undertaken to ensure that the Michaelmas Fair and diverted traffic ran smoothly again this year.

It was **resolved** that the Cemetery and Works Supervisors report be approved.

A60 **Play Area Safety Reports**

The Committee noted the safety reports received on the Towns Councils play areas. One item of play equipment was considered at high risk had been noted in the Boxhill recreation ground. This piece of equipment had been vandalized and was beyond repair. Consequently this had been decommissioned by the Works Team ready for removal.

A61 **Play Area and Outdoor Gym Equipment**

The Committee had received several suggestions as to where to place outdoor gym equipment, such as that already installed at the Ladygrove Paddock in the south of the town. Some areas were considered unsuitable due to the proximity to nurseries or were not Town Council property.

The Chairman therefore suggested that the following be considered: To replace a slide in Elizabeth Avenue play area along with a small springer piece of equipment. In Hill View play area a springer piece of equipment also needed replacing. Outdoor gym equipment should be considered for Boxhill recreation ground, replacing one piece of broken equipment and installing six new ones around the edge of the football pitches.

Proposed by Councillor Marilyn Badcock, seconded by Councillor Samantha Bowring and unanimously **resolved** accordingly.

A Member asked if the Town Council had carried out any impact studies on the introduction of outdoor gym equipment in so far as it may that may compromise commercial interests in the town. The Head of Service delivery informed the meeting that no studies had been carried out as they had not previously been requested. Some Members of the committee felt this was unnecessary as the outdoor equipment was of a different nature to that in a gym and used by different people. The Member who raised the issue said he was concerned and that he would contact local businesses in the town regarding the matter. The Chairman asked him to report his findings back to the Committee.

The Head of Service Delivery raised a matter about a fence forming a boundary in the play area at Elizabeth Avenue which had been vandalised. The advice of a consultant looking into the Town Councils land ownership was that the fence did not belong to the Town Council. However the precedent, set in Chilton Close, was for the Council to erect a weldmesh fence to protect the fence of local residents who suffer such problems particularly those adjacent to play areas. The Committee **resolved** that such a fence be installed.

A62 **Service Reviews**

Members were asked to note the findings of the Service Review previously published and to agree the following action plan:

1. The Town Clerk to write to the District Council regarding the ownership of the Drayton Road allotment site.
2. Service Level Agreements to be completed for approval by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013.

The Committee **resolved** to agree to the above action plan as suggested in the Service Review for the provision of allotments.

A63 **Publicity**

The Committee considered that the following items would benefit from publicity:

- Fun in the Park and Evening event on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2013.
- Christmas Lights – Solar option

A64 **Items for Next Meeting**

Members were asked to contact officers, in writing, with any future agenda item requests. They were also requested to consider items to be included on the agenda of the next meeting of the Amenities and Recreation Committee (2<sup>nd</sup> January 2013).

- Green Gym working in Ock Valley Walk
- Mural at Boxhill Recreation ground.

A65 **Dates of meeting for 2012/13**

Members were informed that future meetings of the Amenities and Recreation Committee would be held on the following dates; as previously agreed by the Council:

- Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2013
- Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2013

Regarding Members concern about the 2<sup>nd</sup> January date the Chairman informed the meeting that the agenda would be sent out before Christmas therefore the meeting would be held on 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2013.

A45 **Exclusion of the public, including the Press**

The Chairman proposed and it was **resolved**:

*That in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public (including the press) be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.*

A46 **Abingdon in Bloom**

The Committee received a confidential report from the Head of Service Delivery.

The Committee **resolved** *that the flower beds in the town centre be taken back in-house with regard to planting and maintenance. This included Market Place, County Hall, Roysse Court, Bath Street and two beds in Stratton Way.*

A47 **Cemetery**

The Committee received a letter from a user of the Spring Garden Cemetery with regard to unacceptable behaviour and the number of vehicles allowed in the cemetery.

The Committee were informed by the Head of Service Delivery that in the past disabled visitors to the cemetery had to make an appointment to have the gates unlocked to allow their vehicle in. This was challenged by a member of the public as the road/pathway in the cemetery did not make easy access for wheelchair or buggy users at any other time. The result of this challenge was the Town Council was a party to mediation with the complainant and it was agreed that, because of the uneven road/pathway, the Town Council would keep the gates unlocked. However the Town Council had since installed a tarmac road/pathway which was suitable for wheelchair and buggy users. There was no longer a need to keep the gates unlocked, although some disabled access was still required and the Council could revert to the "by appointment" method.

Regarding the other complaints in the letter the Head of Service Delivery said he had been in touch with the appropriate section of the County Councils who referred him to the Thames Valley Police. The police have advised the Council to call them should anything antisocial or criminal behaviour take place in the cemetery.

Members were concerned that other users of the cemetery were being affected by this behaviour and concerns for the welfare of the staff were also expressed. It was **resolved** *that the cemetery gates be locked and those wishing to take their vehicles into the cemetery must be blue badge holders and make an appointment with the cemetery office. The Committee also resolved to instruct staff to call the police if anything illegal or contrary to public order in the cemetery was taking place, and a log should be kept of any complaints which are made relating to these matters.*

Members also asked that officers investigate the feasibility and cost of CCTV monitoring for the area.

The meeting rose at 9.30pm

*Amenities and Recreation Committee*  
*7<sup>th</sup> November 2012*

Signed ..... Date .....