

Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

Draft Minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on Wednesday 14th August 2013 at 5.00pm in the Committee Room at the Old Abbey House, Abingdon-on-Thames.

Present:

Councillor Iain Littlejohn	Chairman
Councillor Alison Rooke	Vice Chairman
Councillor Marilyn Badcock	
Councillor Lesley Legge	
Councillor Sandy Lovatt	Ex-officio, Leader of the Council
Councillor Katie Nobes	

In Attendance:

Councillor Julie Mayhew-Archer	
Ms Johannah Aynsley	Guildhall Manager
Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk
2 members of the public	

G42 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Samantha Bowring, Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames and Ms Heather Brown, co-opted Member.

G43 **Declaration of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

G44 **Minutes**

Resolved: *that the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 18th July 2013 be approved and be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.*

G45 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising which were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

G46 **Public Participation**

Dr Jim Halliday indicated that he wished to make a statement. The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Iain Littlejohn, proposed and it was **resolved** that Standing Orders be suspended to allow the statement to be made.

Dr Halliday thanked the Committee for allowing him to address them and made three points:

- *“Firstly, given that the car park to the rear of the Guildhall is currently fenced off, I presume to deter uninvited car parking, perhaps the Committee might want to consider whether this might present an ideal opportunity to carry out archaeological investigations?”*
- *“Secondly, since April, I have noticed and twice reported that the external floodlights on the Guildhall are on 24 hours a day – the large one that shines on the front steps and the three which light the alleyway. This seems to be a waste of electricity and money – perhaps the light sensor controlling the lights could be fixed – or has it been decided that it is not worth the expense?”*
- *“Thirdly, a plea – on 1st August, I (and other residents) were told that the next Committee meeting date had been changed from 29th August to Thursday 15th August. We duly noted the new date in our diaries, only to discover last night that the date and time had both been subsequently changed again. Given the interest that residents have in the Committee, please could you either not change meeting dates quite so often, or at least tell us immediately you do so – thanks.”*

Cllr Lesley Legge and the Head of Service Delivery entered the meeting at this point, it being 5.12pm

G47 **Property matters – Roysse Court**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Service Delivery as circulated with the agenda.

It was reported that the contract for the improvement scheme had now been awarded to Beard following a tender exercise and also that listed building consent had been granted by the District Council. Scaffolding would be erected week beginning 26th August 2013 and work on site would commence the following week. The works compound would be situated in the Guildhall car park and this, together with the heavier traffic which would be servicing both the Council’s project and the adjacent refurbishment of the Crown and Thistle, meant that the car park would be closed to the public until further notice.

There was close co-operation with the Oxfordshire Registration Service regarding the continuation of their activities during this period and in particular the impact on weddings. It was noted that the Registry Service staff and Mrs Jacky McNally, Operational Service Manager for the Registration Service had been particularly helpful.

The Head of Service Delivery reported on discussions regarding insulation of gas central heating on the ground floor. Members asked that the Council's retained valuer be consulted in this regard.

Resolved: *that the report of the Head of Service Delivery be approved.*

G48 **Manager's Report**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Guildhall Manager in relation to the above.

Further to her report, the Guildhall Manager talked Members through the management information which had been produced in relation to bookings and occupancy via the new Avalon booking system. Members considered that although there was some additional work to undertake as the system was implemented it would be very helpful to have similar reports at future meetings.

It was noted that the Guildhall was involved in the Heritage Weekend and in particular that Ruby's Vintage Fair would be hosted by the Guildhall on Saturday 14th September 2013.

The Comedy Clubs, which took place on the last Thursday of each month, were proving to be popular and Members were requested to put word around regarding these evenings.

It was noted that there would also be a "Vintage Girls' Night" on 30th November with retro performances, beauty and clothing stalls, and vintage inspired food and drink. A Member suggested that the Guildhall may wish to organise a similar gentleman's evening.

Cllr Katie Nobes entered the meeting at this point, it being 5.53pm.

The Committee noted the position statement in regard to catering arrangements at the Guildhall. The Manager stated that the system was being changed so that both cost of food and the staff servicing an event were to be made clearer in any quotations which are given.

The Chairman of the Communication Sub-Committee, Cllr Marilyn Badcock, stated that the Guildhall was part of the new town portal and asked that more prominence be given to Guildhall events on the news part of the website. She also emphasised the need for the new website to be kept up to date and queried the continued operation of the old website. In relation to the latter, the Guildhall Manager stated there had been problems in closing the old website down because it had been set up by the person who had been engaged by the Town Council to assist with marketing. This person had had some issues in communicating with the website hosters but she hoped that this matter would be resolved in due course.

Resolved: *that the Guildhall Manager's report be approved.*

G49 **Date of Next Meeting and Calendar of Meetings**

It was noted that the calendar of meetings for the year had been agreed as follows, all meetings being scheduled for 5.30pm on Thursdays:

29th August; 12th September; 17th October; 21st November; 19th December; 16th January 2014; 27th February; 6th March; 10th April.

G50 **Exclusion of the Public Including the Press**

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

That in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1060 (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.

G51 **Confidential Appendix to the Minutes of the Meeting of 18th July 2013**

Resolved: *that the Confidential Appendix to the Guildhall Committee meeting held on 18th July 2013 be approved and be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.*

G52 **Manager's Report**

The Committee received and considered the confidential section of the report of the Guildhall Manager.

Members noted some recent damage to blinds in the Roysse Room. It was understood that there was a system in place to inspect rooms after use and Members asked that the operation of this system be looked at in order to enable such damage in the future to be attributed to the person or organisation which caused it. This would enable those causing such damage to be readily identifiable and for recovery of costs to be instituted if appropriate.

In relation to bar services at events, Members suggested that a system of reserving drinks for the half time interval be investigated and implemented where appropriate.

Resolved: that the report be approved.

G53 Guildhall: Commercial Viability Assessment

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above.

The Chairman of the Committee, Cllr Iain Littlejohn, introduced Mr David Hearn of Max Associates, who had been commissioned by the Council to undertake this assessment.

Members then proceeded to page through the report so that comment could be made as appropriate, and a number of minor amendments were asked for which would be reflected in the final draft of the report. This is detailed in the confidential appendix.

It was **resolved:**

- i. That the commercial viability assessment for the Guildhall be approved.*
- ii. That the document be released into the public domain subject to the redaction of any parts which were considered to be commercially sensitive or confidential for any other reason, authority in this regard being delegated to the Town Clerk. It was noted in this regard that the main section which would be subject to redaction would be that of Section 7, the financial projections (page 28).*

G54 Guildhall: Charitable Status

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk in relation to the above.

Members considered that the matter required further and detailed consideration and it was suggested that a working party be established and

that that working party be requested to recommend a firm proposal or a number of options which the Council could then consider.

It was **resolved**:

- i. That a working party be established to consider the potential for the operation of the Guildhall to be transferred to a charity.
- ii. That the working party consists of two members from the Conservative Group, two members from the Liberal Democrat Group and one of the two members who are not members of the political groups.
- iii. That the Town Clerk contacts the respective group leaders and the two non-group Members to seek nominations to serve on this working group.
- iv. That the Town Clerk draft terms of reference for the working group to be approved by this Committee at its next meeting.

G55 Guildhall Improvement Project Phase Two – Fundraising

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Guildhall Manager in relation to the above. The report made a number of requests and recommendations which are included in the confidential appendix.

The meeting rose at 7.40pm