

## Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

### **Draft Minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2013 at 5.30pm 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 Sandy Lovatt	ex-officio, Leader of the Council
Councillor Patrick Lonergan	
Councillor Julie Mayhew-Archer	
Councillor Katie Nobes	

#### In Attendance:

Miss Johannah Aynsley	Guildhall Manager
Mr David Boyd	Architect
Mr Daniel Maull	Ridge and Partners (item at minute G30 only)
Mr Stephen Rich	Head of Service Delivery (Clerk to the meeting)
Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk
Lewandowski Wilcox	Architects
Mr Peter Turvey	Quantity Surveyor

11 members of the public (for item at minute G32).

#### G25 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Samantha Bowring, Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames and Councillor Lesley Legge.

#### G26 **Declaration of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### G27 **Minutes**

**Resolved:** *that the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2013 be approved and be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.*

G28 **Matters Arising**

Minute G17 – Amend “1,000 visitors” to read “1,000 new visitors over and above normal customers”.

The water leak that had appeared in the Roysse Court Garden had been reported to Thames Water.

Minute G23 – Councillor Alison Rooke had also left the meeting early and wished this to be recorded.

G29 **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.*

G30 **Property matters – Roysse Court**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Head of Service regarding the Roysse Court project, together with the tender report.

Mr Daniel Maull from Ridge and Partners introduced the Tender Report to the meeting detailing the results of the recent tender exercise. Following evaluation of the tenders Ridge were recommending to the Town Council that the tender from Beard offered the most competitive quote and the greatest cost certainty.

Mr Maull also recommended to the Committee that further savings could be made by accepting Option 2 for the finishing of the internal walls within the first and second floors of Roysse Court. This would see the walls covered with plaster board and skimmed rather than tearing off the existing covering and risking the problem of further remedial work.

Both tenders had not included for a temporary roof covering whilst the roof was being repaired, however Mr Maull informed the Committee that once the membrane was in place the building would be waterproof and that the contractors would ensure this.

The Committee was also informed that whilst it was thought that there had been movement of the building in the past, which was the likely cause of the cracks on the west side of the building, this was no longer measurable and therefore no further work was required.

The Committee **resolved** to accept the tender report by Ridge and Partners and appoint Beard as the contractor to carry out the Roysse Court project subject to and following the grant of Listed Building consent by the District Council.

See also further detail and one resolution in confidential appendix.

Mr Daniel Maull left the meeting at this point.

11 members of the public entered the meeting at this point.

G31 **Re-admission of the Public, Including the Press**

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

*That the public (including the press) be re-admitted to the meeting.*

G32 **Guildhall Improvement Project Phase 2 – Architectural Plans and application for Planning Permission.**

The Chairman welcomed members of the public and the architects and quantity surveyor for the Guildhall Improvement Project Phase 2.

*The Chairman suspended Standing Orders in order to allow members of the public to address the Committee.*

*Dr Jim Halliday spoke to the meeting and requested that the Committee only apply for planning permission for those phases of the scheme that they were confident could be built in the near future. If the Council applied for permission of the whole scheme but only implemented part of it in the first instance, this would cast a planning blight over nearby properties and have knock on effects for anyone trying to sell their house situated near the Guildhall. Dr Halliday argued that an unbuilt part of the project is unsettling for prospective buyers of adjoining properties.*

*Mrs Sue Kenrick addressed the meeting and thanked the Committee for the information it had supplied to local residents and the openness and patience with which they were dealing with local residents concerns. Mrs Kenrick asked if there were plans to improve the ventilation of the main hall as she observed users of the hall on the disabled walkway during the hot weather, taking the air and allowing loud music to escape through the open doors.*

*The architects replied that ventilation of the main hall was being looked at with an introduction of air conditioning high on the agenda.*

*Mrs Kenrick also asked if the Committee had carried out a survey of the three car parks nearest to the Guildhall. When events coincided at the Guildhall and Cosenor's House the car parks are full leaving residents visitors having to use distant car parks. Mrs Kenrick noted that the Charter car park (multi storey) was only partially open in the evening. She stated that she would oppose any plans to build a cinema on stilts.*

*With regard to car parking, the Chairman, Cllr Iain Littejohn, replied that it was the Council's assumption that the multi storey did not open in the evening due to lack of demand but should the Council be able to demonstrate additional evening demand then it would expect that the District Council would be happy to extend opening hours.*

*Mr Mike Cleary spoke to the meeting and informed them he was a practicing architect and it seemed to him that what had been designed would have an adverse impact on adjoining houses. Mr Cleary said he had created some "overlays" of the designs drawn up and, in his view, the cinema building could be constructed from the ground level rather than first floor level which would be more economic and have less of an impact on adjoining properties. An opening in the existing kitchen could be used as a fire escape and the plant room could be constructed on the roof of the cinema building if it was lowered.*

*On being asked if he had looked at the internal levels and how access to different parts of the building would be made, Mr Cleary said he had not looked at the internal workings of the building.*

*Mrs Sue Dunsden expressed her concerns to the Committee regarding the wall that runs from Abbey Close through to the properties in Thames Street. She voiced her concerns about the damage being done to the wall by commercial vehicles entering the Crown and Thistle property and the Guildhall.*

*The Chairman informed the meeting that a Highways Engineer had been to appointed, as part of the phase 2 project, to look at road adjoining the Guildhall and had made a number of recommendations including:*

- Size of vehicles that use this entrance should be limited.*
- Bell bollards should be installed by the side of the wall to protect it.*

*The architects said that during the building works the contractor will be responsible for the protection of the wall and that a Party Wall Agreement will be necessary. The Chairman also stated that ahead of any works taking place, the Council would set up a meeting between the contractors and the residents.*

*Mr Jack Atkinson informed the Committee that, in his view, the public consultation did not represent the town as responses numbers were low with 230 questionnaires having been submitted. He also queried the accuracy of the drawings.*

*The Chairman said that the Council had gone through and strong and robust procedure regarding public consultation.*

*The Chairman thanked the members of the public for their comments and input and invited them to stay to the remainder of the meeting if they wished.*

*The Chairman reinstated standing orders.*

### Report of the Town Clerk

The Committee received and noted the report of the Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk informed the meeting that revised plans had been circulated. The architects would work through the proposed changes, since the March 2013 plans had been presented, with the Committee.

The Town Clerk said he was seeking from this meeting a recommendation to go to Finance and General Purposes Committee then to Town Council for one of the following:

1. To approve the architectural plans and associated costings in relation to the Guildhall Phase 2 project, produced by the Council's project team, as summarised in the report of the Town Clerk and the professional team, subject to detailing of any amendments, including that in relation to the siting of the cinema.
2. To approve a sub-scheme, based on the architectural plans and associated costings in relation to the Guildhall Phase 2 project, produced by the Council's project team, as summarised in the report of the Town Clerk and the professional team., subject to detailing of any amendments including which parts of the scheme should be the subject of a planning application.
3. Not to make a planning application

The architects informed the meeting that the costings had increased since March 2013; the reasons for this were detailed in the confidential costing report.

The architects informed the meeting that the Planning Officer at the District Council was supportive of the scheme. They had also received representations from local residents which they had taken in to account.

They had received a lot of questions regarding materials and said this was the part of the debate that now needed to take place.

The fundamental concept of the scheme had not changed and the cinema level is at first floor level to enable flows and access to be optimised.

The Chairman said there was potential for the undercroft of the new cinema to become an area for antisocial behaviour. The architects replied that they proposed that the area would be gated and covered by CCTV. Security would be built in to design throughout the development.

In relation to comments regarding the external staircase, the architects stated that it would be possible to install a screen into the design to avoid overlooking.

A Member queried whether the provision of car parking would be an obligation in planning terms. He felt that access for deliveries to the building was more important.

In reply to questions regarding placing the cinema at ground floor level the architects said this would increase the likelihood of expense and delay in relation to archaeological investigations and that piling was preferable and less intrusive. Siting the cinema on the ground floor would mean a major redesign and would be more costly.

A Member asked that should the Council only apply for part of the scheme, what cost implications would arise to go through planning again.

The architects said that for planning purposes the additional costs of submitting further plans would be minimal. Planners would be made aware that implementation of the scheme may be phased and in granting permission they would place timescales on the Town Council to complete. If a redesign was required for later phases then the costs would be close to the costs already incurred.

However there were cost benefits to actually building the scheme in one go rather than in phases. The meeting was also informed that, if planning permission was granted for the whole scheme, it would be considered more favourably when applying to raise funding.

Councillor Sandy Lovatt informed the meeting that it was standard practice for the planning authority to put time limits on permissions granted. He told the local residents to make sure that they asked for time limits to be included, at the public consultation period on planning applications. He was Vice-Chairman of the Vale Planning Committee and stated that he would not be

part of the discussions and decision-making when the matter was considered by the District Council.

A Member asked for confirmation on materials being used. The architects said this still had to be decided but aesthetics and light were important and this would be taken into consideration. Materials would also have to be robust in terms of maintenance.

For reasons of commercial sensitivity the costing information was part of a separate confidential report and further discussion on this matter was deferred to the confidential agenda item.

The members of the public left the meeting at this point, it being 7.12 pm.

G33 **Date of Next Meeting**

The list of future meeting dates was approved by the Committee with the exception of 29<sup>th</sup> August which was changed to 15<sup>th</sup> August 2013.

G34 **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.*

*See also confidential appendix in relation to items as indicated.*

G35 **Confidential Appendix to the Minutes of the Meeting of 13<sup>th</sup> June 2013**

**Resolved:** *that the Confidential Appendix to the Guildhall Committee meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2013 be approved and be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.*

*See also confidential appendix for detail on a matter arising.*

G36 **Manager's Report**

The Committee noted the report of the Guildhall Manager and it was **resolved:** that £2,000 be funded from the General Property Fund to allow for a specialist valuation of the Guildhall complex for the Heritage Lottery Fund bid, which would involve valuation of the building in both existing and proposed uses and quantification of the conservation deficit.

G37 **Guildhall Improvement Project Phase 2 - Architectural Plans and Application for Planning Permission.**

This part of the meeting was held in confidential session as the committee were considering the costing information produced by the Council's Quantity Surveyor and disclosure of the information could prove prejudicial to procurement at a later stage.

The Committee considered the various options. Members discussed the proposal for moving the cinema extension from the first floor to the ground floor. The views and concerns of local residents were appreciated but Members felt that due weight needed to be given to the value of the Project to the residents of the town as a whole, and that for reasons of design and cost, the proposed cinema should be retained at first floor level.

The Council's Quantity Surveyor and project team took the Committee through the various costing documents, explaining the changes in cost since the March 2013 cost plan. The proposed changes had generally resulted in additional costs. The proposed changes had been classified as emanating from the client brief, the design team, inflation, planning, residents, risk allowances and scope gap. These various changes were considered in some detail and Members are referred to the confidential costing paper for further details.

It was **recommended** that the Council approve the architectural plans and associated costings for the full Guildhall phase 2 scheme, as summarised in the report of the Town Clerk and the professional team., with the cinema located as in the previously approved plans (March 2013) and to apply for planning permission for that scheme.

*This recommendation would be referred to the Council's Finance and General Purposes Committee prior to its consideration by the Town Council.*

It was **resolved** that the Council's professional team re-examine the detail of the plans and costs and to bring back proposals to the Finance and General Purposes Committee for suitable amendments which would result in the project being delivered at a maximum cost of between £3.5 and £3.7 million.

*See also confidential appendix in relation to discussion on this item.*

G38 **Guildhall Improvement Project Phase 2 – Funding**

The Committee received and noted the report of the Town Clerk and it was **recommended to the Finance and General Purposes Committee:**

- (i) That an additional sum of £10,000 be allowed for the Roysse Court project, to be drawn from the Council's general property fund.

*(Note: this will be a matter for the Finance and General Purposes Committee to resolve).*

It was **recommended to the Town Council, through the Finance and General Purposes Committee:**

- (ii) That an additional £250,000 from the Guildhall Capital Improvement sum (deferred grant) be allocated to the Guildhall Phase 2 Project rather than to the Roysse Court project, it being noted that if approved the total allocated to the Guildhall Phase 2 Project would amount to £1,000,000.
- (iii) That an allocation of £244,666 be used from the Capital Receipts Reserve to fund the Roysse Court office improvements, with an additional £5,334 then allocated from the general property reserve for that project.

*See also further detail and two resolutions in confidential appendix.*

#### **G39 Guildhall Business Plan**

The Committee received and considered the Guildhall Business Plan, which was in the confidential papers as a draft and for reasons of commercial sensitivity.

Members felt that there was some detail within the plan which required further scrutiny but considered that the plan was robust, realistic and provided justification for the business case for the proposed development going forward.

However to enable more scrutiny of the plan the Chairman deferred it full consideration and approval of the Guildhall Business Plan until the next meeting of the Committee, and requested that any comments regarding the plan be e-mailed to the Town Clerk ahead of that meeting.

#### **G40 Charitable Status**

The Chairman deferred, at the request of Members of the Committee, the item on Charitable Status until the next meeting of the Committee.

Miss Johannah Aynsley left the meeting at this point.

#### **G41 Staffing matters**

The Committee received the confidential report of the Town Clerk in relation to staffing matters.

*Full details and resolutions in the confidential appendix.*

*The meeting rose at 9.10pm*