

## Abingdon-on-Thames Town Council

### Draft Minutes of the Guildhall Committee held on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> March 2014 at 5.30pm in the Committee Room at the Old Abbey House, Abingdon-on-Thames.

#### Present:

Cllr Iain Littlejohn	Chairman
Cllr Marilyn Badcock	
Cllr Lesley Legge	
Cllr Katie Nobes	
Cllr Sandy Lovatt	Chairman Finance & General Purposes Committee
Ms Heather Brown	Co-opted Member

#### In Attendance:

Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer	
Ms Johannah Aynsley	Guildhall Manager
Mr Steve Rich	Head of Service Delivery
Mr Nigel Warner	Town Clerk (Clerk to the meeting)
2 Members of the Public	

#### G98 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Alison Rooke and the Mayor of Abingdon-on-Thames, Cllr Samantha Bowring.

#### G99 Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

#### G100 Minutes

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

**Resolved:** *that the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2013 be approved and be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.*

## G101 **Matters Arising**

Minute G86, public participation: It was reported that at the last meeting, a number of queries were raised by a member of the public, Dr Philip Kenrick, under the public participation session.

It was minuted:

*In relation to the Daylight and Sunlight Study, he had a few queries: on page 3, he stated that the document provides for the versions of the project drawings to be identified, but this had not been done. He felt that the report should confirm explicitly that the July drawings (and not the earlier ones) had been used, if this was the case, as there was a material difference in the roof height of the cinema between the two. In the first table in Appendix 2 (Vertical Sky Component) there were figures listed for windows 8a, 8b and 9a which were not otherwise identified. He queried what/where they were. He noted that there were four further windows in 7 Abbey Close of which no account had been taken. Whilst he did not expect them to be relevant he stated that they should have been included. Also there were windows in 8, Checker Walk which would be affected, though only one of these was visible from the present escape-ramp behind the Guildhall.*

The Town Clerk reported that enquiries had been made of the engineers and the architects and the consolidated response was as follows:

*Q1: On p. 3, the document provides for the versions of the project drawings to be identified, but this is not done. It should confirm explicitly that the July drawings (and not the earlier ones) were used, if this was the case. There is a material difference in the roof height of the cinema between the two.*

*A1: It had been confirmed that the latest drawings were used for the study.*

*Q2: In the first table in Appendix 2 (Vertical Sky Component) there are figures listed for windows 8a, 8b and 9a which are not otherwise identified. What/where are they?*

*A2: Engineers had responded: "This was an error on the part of my CAD team so I apologise for this. They should have been included even though they are secondary windows. I am in the process of having the window keys updated."*

*Q3: As shown in the attached photos, there are four further windows in 7 Abbey Close of which no account has been taken. (I do not expect them to be relevant, but they should have been included. There are also windows in 8, Checker Walk which will be affected, though only one of those is visible from the present escape-ramp behind the Guildhall.*

*A3: With regards to 7 Abbey Close we did not include the four other windows as the windows closest to the development facing the proposal pass the BRE guidelines. Since these four windows face away from the development they are unlikely to be affected. If you would like us to include them we can do but it will take my CAD guys a bit of time to redo the model.*

*Similarly, with regards to 8 Checker Walk these windows were not included since the windows much closer to the development i.e. 11, 12, 13 & 16 meet the BRE recommendations. It was therefore felt not necessary to include these windows. If you would like them included again this shouldn't be a problem.*

It was confirmed that the engineers would update the report in accordance with the above, should the Council so desire. Members **resolved** accordingly.

#### G101 **Public Participation**

Dr Jim Halliday, a nearby resident, raised three items under public participation.

1. He noted that whilst the agenda was showing on the Council's website, he requested that the agenda and open reports be posted up in good time so that interested members of the public had as much notice of the meeting as possible.
2. He stated that the lights over the main Guildhall entrance and also in the alleyway to the side, were out of phase, being on during the day and off at night. The Guildhall stated that the Council's lighting engineers had taken a look at these lights and she would ask them to do so again.
3. He noted that following the change in the way in which the Guildhall Committee functioned, much more work was being undertaken by specific working parties. He understood the reasons for this but wanted to know how these groups would report back to the Committee.

The Chairman stated that the intention was that there would be a report to each meeting of the Guildhall Committee reporting on the deliberations of the working parties together with actions taken and recommendations which they wished to bring forward to the Committee.

(Cllr Katie Nobes entered the meeting at this point, it being 5.42pm.)

## G102 **Manager's Report**

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

The Manager stated that her report was built around the outcomes and updates given to the Operations Working Group meetings during the first quarter of the year. The Manager reported on progress in relation to marketing and information sharing. She reported on advertising initiatives in the local media. The Chairman of the Communications Sub-Committee, Cllr Marilyn Badcock, stated that whilst she commended the marketing initiatives she felt that it would be helpful for such matters to be reported to the Communications Sub-Committee so that the Council could take a co-ordinated approach in relation to such matters. There was a discussion regarding this matter and Members agreed that whilst the content of marketing and advertising was a matter for the individual service / business unit, items of policy and overall strategy in relation to communications required reference to the Council's overall communications strategy. This would ensure co-ordination across the Council.

In relation to the suggestions for advertising "V Cases" this would need to be considered by the Amenities and Recreation Committee which was taking the lead in relation to notice boards. Members were pleased to hear that following a meeting with Scottish Widows Investment Partners they were keen on becoming involved in "Abingdon in Bloom" but it was noted that the Town Council could not be responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of hanging baskets within the precinct.

Members were pleased to note the development of the operations manual, noting that the Council's revised HR policies would be incorporated into this manual. It was noted that the Community and Visitor Information Centre would be relocating to the Guildhall by the end of April 2014.

Members noted the various issues in relation to the building and its maintenance. Members requested that a report from the Curator/ Guildhall Manager be brought forward the next meeting of the Committee, outlining recommendations for cleaning and restoring as necessary the various works of art in the Guildhall, including budgets and timings. Members also asked that the plans for installing a copy of the Monks Map be progressed.

(Cllr Marilyn Badcock left the meeting at this point, it being 6pm.)

Members noted that unfortunately there had been a number of leaks in the roofing to the newer part of the building. These had been patched where possible; however, substantive works of repair would now await the Stage 2 Improvement Works. Improvements to the building security system were also noted.

Members noted that there was a suggestion to look at the front entrance to create a loading / unloading bay which would assist hirers and the Head of Service Delivery was examining the possibility of using removable or plastic bollards in this regard.

Members noted the review of bar prices and asked that a report on the procurement of bar supplies be presented to the next meeting. It was also noted that letters were going out in relation to the revised room rates. Members noted that during the run up to the Stage 2 Improvement Works the marketing strategy was to concentrate on family and community leisure as activity areas within which the Guildhall has the most experience. Work to attract the business / corporate community would best take place following the Guildhall development work.

Having regard to the planned improvement works, the Committee agreed that potential customers be advised that there would be no availability for weddings and larger events from January 2015 onwards due to the redevelopment. However, this would need to be reviewed at the next meeting following the outcome of the HLF Enterprise Fund application. It was noted that the Operations Working Group had discussed marketing in some detail and had agreed that the Guildhall must concentrate on its existing strengths in terms of its activities rather than aspirations during the period through to the redevelopment. Members were interested to note that the working group had discussed marketing “last minute wedding packages” and taking forward this idea as a unique marketing proposition.

A Member requested whether it might be possible to attract an antiques fair to the Guildhall, as this for many years had been a popular feature at weekends. The Manager stated that she had investigated this matter on a number of occasions. Although there were a number of potential fairs in the area, in reality it had been found that these were under the control of one organisation and their main obstacle from using the Guildhall was the difficult access which was encountered by the different stall holders in bringing their goods into the building.

Members noted that utilisation remains dominated by regular repeat block bookings which account for 72% of all bookings.

Members raised a number of matters which they asked be attended to. On a previous tour of the building, Members noted that the spotlights which had been installed to light the Mayor’s Crest in the ante room to the Roysse Room were large and somewhat out of keeping; it was agreed that they be replaced with something more subtle. Similarly, a Member asked that a mechanism be put in place for concealing the rather ugly brackets which were holding up the Coat of Arms itself.

A Member noted that in relation to the ladies' cloakrooms adjacent to the Abbey Room, there was nowhere to hang a coat or handbag and she stated that a shelf and perhaps a peg on the door would be appreciated. Finally, a Member requested that the orientation of the lamp outside the Roysse Room entrance be looked at to see if it could be changed as the crests appeared to be pointing in the wrong direction; the Town Clerk stated that it would be looked at to see whether this could be achieved although he cautioned that sometimes when these things are moved it may not be possible to reinstate them without damaging them.

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

### G103 **Reports from Guildhall Working Groups**

The Committee received and considered the notes from the Future Operations Working Group meetings which had taken place during the first quarter of the year. The group had agreed that the initial focus of the group was to lay down strategy for the future build operation of the Guildhall. They had discussed their commercial objectives and the need to develop the commercial work relating to the Improvement Project. It was noted that the intention was that this group would meet fortnightly on Friday afternoons and alternate with the Future Build Meetings.

1. In terms of actions, Mayfield Arts who had previously advised were to be contacted regarding commercial cinema operations. Matt Prosser, one of the Strategic Directors at the District Council, would be invited to a future meeting of the group to advise on some of the “dos and don'ts” for the future project. The group had nominated Cllrs Monica Lovatt and Alison Rooke, as Past Mayors representing each of the two political groups on the Council, to consider the transition of the Mayor's Parlour from the Old Abbey House to the Guildhall and to report back to the group. Finally, the Guildhall Manager was contacting similar arts and cinema venues in and around the region to arrange meetings with them and to tour their facilities.
2. The Future Building Group would be meeting week commencing Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March.
3. It was reported that the Charitable Status Working Group was due to meet at 2.30pm on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

### G104 **Date of next meeting and calendar of meetings**

It was noted that the calendar of meetings was due to be presented to the Town Council later in the month and that the provisional dates for the Guildhall Committee Meetings for 2014/15 were as follows:

- Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014;
- Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September 2014;
- Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2014;
- Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015.

The Committee agreed that their preference was for these meetings to commence at 5.30pm.

(Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer and the members of the public left the meeting at this point, it being 6.42pm.)

**G105 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.*

**G106 Confidential Appendix to the Minutes of the Meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

The Committee received and considered the confidential appendix to the minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Committee held on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

**Resolved:** *that the Confidential Appendix to the minutes of the Guildhall Committee meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2013 be approved and be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.*

**G106 Matters Arising**

See note of discussion under confidential appendix (no resolutions).

**G107 Report of the Guildhall Manager**

It was noted that there were no matters in the Guildhall Manager's report which were considered to be confidential.

G108 **Guildhall Working Groups**

See one recommendation within the confidential appendix.

G109 **Guildhall Improvement Project Phase 2**

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

**Resolved:** *that the report be noted.*

G110 **Museum Collections Storage**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Museum Curator in relation to the above.

**Resolved:** *that the report be noted and that further investigation take place as detailed within the confidential appendix.*

The meeting rose at 7.25pm.