

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Abingdon Area Committee

held at 7.00pm on Monday 3 December 2012

at the Abbey House, Abingdon, OX14 3JE



Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Marilyn Badcock, Mike Badcock, Julia Bricknell, Jim Halliday, Pat Lonergan, Sandy Lovatt, Julie Mayhew-Archer, Aidan Melville and Helen Pighills

Officers: Jayne Bolton, Carole Cumming, Steve Culliford, and Clare Kingston

Number of members of the public: 3

Ab.1 Election of a chair/man and vice chair/man

RESOLVED: To elect Councillors Julie Mayhew-Archer and Aidan Melville as chair and vice-chair respectively for the remainder of the 2012/13 municipal year.

Ab.2 Apologies for absence

Councillors Tony de Vere, Gervase Duffield, Jason Fiddaman, Peter Jones, Angela Lawrence, and Richard Webber had all sent their apologies for absence.

Ab.3 Minutes

RESOLVED: To adopt as a correct record the minutes of the committee meeting held on 22 November 2011 and agree that the chair signs them.

Ab.4 Declarations of interest

Councillor Aidan Melville declared a pecuniary interest in the grant application by the Preston Road Community Centre as he was a member of its management committee. He left the room while the committee considered this item.

Ab.5 Terms of reference

The committee noted its terms of reference.

Ab.6 Urgent business and chair's announcements

None

Ab.7 Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting the area committee

Two members of the public had asked to address the committee.

1. Ray Ball made a statement in support of the application by the Preston Road Community Centre Association. He reported that there were two elements to the application: to replace tables that were unsafe, and to upgrade the lighting. He reported that the new tables would be treated as an asset in accounting terms and would be subject to depreciation over time.
2. Karen Roberts made a statement on behalf of Abingdon Rowing Club. The club was in need of a proper floor surface for its new gymnasium. Once complete, the club aimed to open the gym up to members of the public on payment of a membership subscription.

The chair thanked the speakers for their contribution.

Ab.8 Community Grants

The committee considered the head of corporate strategy's report. This set out details of two capital community grant applications. The head of corporate strategy updated the officer's recommendation for Preston Road Community Centre and clarified the council's position on capital and revenue expenditure and how it would relate to the Preston Road application.

The committee noted that the Cabinet had allocated a budget of £26,514 to spend on capital grants in 2012/13.

The committee considered the applications and awarded grants to both applicants. This left £20,503 in the committee's budget.

Later, the committee debated the capital grants scheme and the lack of applications on the agenda. The committee was disappointed that only two applications had come forward and questioned why the scheme was limited to capital grants only when many community groups were in need of revenue funding. The officers agreed to review the guidance notes to applicants to improve the guidance relating to capital expenditure. The officers would also review whether the guidance was clear on advising applicants that they should approach their local parish or town council for additional funds.

Councillors asked whether the scheme could be re-opened to allow further applications in the current financial year. The officers reported that there were no plans to re-open the scheme again this year due to the limited staff resources to administer the various grant schemes. The committee expressed concern at this, especially as £20,503 remained in the budget for this financial year. The committee asked that a meeting was convened between the four area committee chairmen and the chairman and vice-chairman of the Scrutiny Committee to discuss this and to evaluate the current scheme, possibly through a scrutiny review group; the latter being a matter for Scrutiny Committee to determine. The committee also asked the officers to look at better ways to inform councillors about the grant applications received, possibly through listing the details on the council's website.

RESOLVED:

(a) To award the following grants:

Applicant	Project	Grant	Comments
Abingdon Rowing Club	Flooring for a new gym	50 per cent of the total project costs of £2,021 up to a maximum of £1,011	Conditions of this grant are: evidence that non-rowing membership availability has been advertised together with the membership costs for non-rowers
Preston Road Community Centre Association	Replace electric lighting and tables	58 per cent of the total project costs of £8,618 up to a maximum of £5,000	The decision to award over the normal 50 per cent of the total project cost is due to the ongoing benefit and savings this project will provide under the 'spend to save' ethos for the lighting project

- (b) To request democratic services to organise a meeting between the four area committee chairmen, the head of corporate strategy and the chairman and vice-chairman of the Scrutiny Committee to review the remaining budgets, provide feedback on the first round of the capital community grant scheme, and discuss whether to recommend that the scheme should be reviewed by a scrutiny review group;
- (c) In the event that the capital grants scheme cannot be re-opened for further applications in the current financial year, to recommend to Cabinet that the remaining budget be carried forward by each area committee to allow each committee to spend their surplus in 2013/14;
- (d) To recommend Cabinet that it should consider re-introducing the revenue grant scheme (by five votes to nil with two abstentions);
- (e) To request the officers to review the guidance to grant applicants to ensure that there is a clear explanation of capital and revenue costs and that applicants should approach their local town or parish council for additional funds; and
- (f) To request the officers to look at better ways to inform councillors about the grant applications received, possibly through listing the details on the council's website.

Exempt information under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972

None

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm