

# Ab.27

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ABINGDON AREA COMMITTEE

HELD AT THE NORTHCOURT CENTRE,  
NORTHCOURT ROAD, ABINGDON ON  
TUESDAY, 28TH MARCH, 2006 AT 7.00PM

### Open to the Public, including the Press

PRESENT:

MEMBERS: Councillor Julie Mayhew-Archer (Chair), Jim Halliday (Vice-Chair), Janet Morgan, Mike Badcock, Paul Bizzell, Mary de Vere, Tony de Vere, Richard Gibson, Peter Green, Peter Jones, Monica Lovatt, Alison Rooke, Roz Smith and Councillor Richard Webber

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Carole Nicholl and Toby Warren

NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:

#### Ab.32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were recorded from Councillors Gervase Duffield and Laurel Symons.

#### Ab.33 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on Abingdon Area Committee held on 1 February 2006 were adopted and signed as a correct record.

#### Ab.34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Janet Morgan declared a personal interest in the grant application from the Abingdon NET in so far as she was a member of the NET's Management Committee.

Councillors Peter Green, Peter Jones, Monica Lovatt, Julie Mayhew-Archer and Alison Rooke each declared a personal interest in the grant application from the Abingdon NET in so far as they were Abingdon Town Councillors and Abingdon Town Council had been asked to consider funding.

#### Ab.35 URGENT BUSINESS AND CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

##### Chair's Announcements

The Chair announced that future meetings of the Committee would be held on the following dates: -

Thursday 6 July 2006  
Thursday 19 October 2006  
Thursday 22 March 2007

##### Urgent Business

In accordance with Section 100B(4)(b) of the Local Government Act 1972 and Standing Order 21(4) she had agreed to accept an item of urgent business regarding requests from Sutton Courtenay Parish Council concerning a review of boundaries for area committees; the introduction of forums; and discussion of other matters. The letter was considered as urgent business in view of the need to consider the matter before the start of the new financial year in view of the need to allocate resources. (Minute Ab.41 refers).

Ab.36 STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 32

None.

Ab.37 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 32

None.

Ab.38 UPDATE ON GRANTS

The Committee received and considered an agenda item which reminded Members that at the last meeting, an application was considered from the Abingdon Concert Band towards the cost of purchasing a pair of timpanis and running a Play Day workshop.

The Committee resolved to underwrite the Play Day up to a maximum of £100 but deferred a decision on the timpanis pending further information on other outstanding grant applications.

It was reported that Abingdon Concert Band had recently advised the Council that its application to Awards for All for the purchase of the timpanis had been successful and as a result the Band would not be seeking a grant from the Vale for this purpose.

*RESOLVED*

*that the agenda report be noted.*

Ab.39 COMMUNITY GRANTS/ BUDGET POSITION/ PARISH CLEANSING BIDS

Councillors Peter Green, Peter Jones, Monica Lovatt, Janet Morgan, Julie Mayhew-Archer and Laurel Symons had each declared a personal interest in part of this item and in accordance with Standing Order 34 they remained in the meeting during its consideration.

The Committee received and considered report 259/05 of the Strategic Director, the purpose of which was to set out the current budget position for the Abingdon Area Committee for Community Grants and to invite Members to consider and determine the grant application received since the last meeting; and to consider and determine parish cleansing bids received for 2006/07.

The report was considered as follows: -

1. Grant application – The NET, Abingdon

It was reported that the County Council would fund workers but not activities or equipment. Overhead costs would be met by the NET. A grant had been sought from Abingdon Town Council and it was thought that any grants received would cover the total capital costs and running costs.

In terms of sustaining the project, it was reported that the NET had indicated that grant awards this year would give the organisation “breathing space” and that other sources of funding could be secured for the future when there would be no capital costs.

Consultation with young people had identified that a cinema was needed in Abingdon. It was estimated that up to 150 people could attend each film showing. It was noted that the project was aimed at a 13 – 19 year old age group. It was noted that there were no funds available from the Community Safety Partnership as all funds had been

allocated. It was noted that it was difficult to quantify the exact costs of the project, for example the hire costs of films had not been included. The NET would not be charging admission fees although there would be a membership fee.

It was noted that £4,500 was sought towards the capital costs of the project. It was considered that funding towards capital costs would be appropriate although there was less support for funding running costs as this might set a precedent for future years. Consideration was given as to whether a grant offer should be subject to matched funding by the County Council, although this suggestion was not supported.

2. Applications for £500 or less

The Committee was advised of three applications for £500 or less as follows:-

<u>Applicant</u>	<u>Scheme</u>	<u>Grant Requested</u>
Abingdon Library	Upkeep of the fish tank	£500
Drayton Arts Group	Artists materials	£300
Abingdon Area Archaeological and Historical Society	Exhibition of history and community of Ock Street	£500

3. Parish Council Cleansing Bids

It was noted that Appleford was undertaking a small amount of work only.

**RESOLVED**

- (a) *that the Committee's remaining budget for 2005/06 of £12,755.48 be noted;*
- (b) *that such funds as are required be transferred from the environmental agenda to the social agenda to meet the grant award as set out below;*
- (c) *that the following grant be awarded: -*

<u>Applicant</u>	<u>Scheme</u>	<u>Grant / Decision</u>
The NET, Abingdon	Towards the capital cost of running a Saturday evening session for young people	£4,500, Social Agenda, Town & Village Vitality priority (proposed by Councillor Richard Gibson, seconded by Councillor Peter Jones and agreed by 14 votes to nil)

- (d) *that it be noted that three applications have been received for a grant of £500 or less and in accordance with the Council's policy, these are being considered under delegated authority by the Head of Innovation and Enterprise in consultation with the Chair of the Committee;*
- (e) *that it be noted that the budget for the Abingdon Area Committee for the 2006/07 financial year is £28,220.00 as determined by the Executive at its meeting on 3 March 2006, based on the percentage of the electorate in Abingdon as at 1 January 2006;*

# Ab.30

- (f) *that the bids for parish cleansing in 2006/07 which comply with the criteria, be determined as set out below, it being noted that the grants awarded will be allocated from the 2006/07 budget: -*

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Scheme</u>	<u>Amount Awarded</u>
Drayton	Litter clearance	£500
Appleford	Seasonal leaf clearance from pavement	£45

- (g) *that the Executive be asked to approve that any unspent budget in the 2005/06 financial year may be carried forward to the 2006/07 financial year for allocation by the Abingdon Area Committee.*

## Ab.40 TARGETING GRANT FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE ABINGDON AREA

The Committee received and considered an agenda item which advised that the Committee had considered previously the idea of a prospectus setting out the Committee's priorities in providing support to the local community. A draft prospectus had been prepared and amendments had been discussed.

The amended draft prospectus now included an introduction which was designed to explain the role of the Area Committee in relation to the Vale Community Strategy and the Oxfordshire Local Area Agreement. The introduction also made it clear that the Committee had a limited budget but might be able to offer a small financial grant to a suitable project.

The prospectus could help the Area Committee to demonstrate its community leadership role by championing projects that promoted community self help and were consistent with the priorities of the Vale Community Strategy.

The prospectus would act as guide for applicants by indicating the Committee's priorities for support. However, it would need to make clear that each application was determined on its individual merits and that the Committee was free to support project activity which was not mentioned in the prospectus.

Members are requested to determine the final content of the prospectus and to decide whether they wish to convene an Abingdon Area Forum meeting in order to facilitate public consultation on the content.

The Amended draft prospectus attached as an Appendix to the agenda was considered in detail and the following comments made: -

### Prospectus

- The Prospectus was based on strands and themes from the Community Strategy which Members might not find relevant to Abingdon.
- Some details of previous grants should be included.
- A "layman's version" of the prospectus should be produced, it being considered that the use of the text set out in the "Priorities in Abingdon and Area in 2006/07" column would be suitable.
- Readers would be put off by a lengthy document.

### Distribution

- Consideration needed to be given as to how the Prospectus would be circulated.

# Ab.31

- It was noted that was intended that it would be sent to Abingdon area grant recipients (those who had received a grant previously or who had expressed an interest in applying for a grant); it would be available on the web, at libraries and it would be provided to applicants.
- A copy of the “layman’s version” of the prospectus should be included on the web.

## Front Sheet

- This was aimed at promoting some projects which would benefit the Abingdon Area.

## Page 1

- Transport should be lower down in the document, although it was noted that the order was as per the Community Strategy.

## Page 2

- It might be that young groups would wish to undertake the consultation themselves.
- Details should be included about existing communities.

## Page 3

- This seemed limited. Details should cover existing groups and projects.
- This could include priorities where the Committee did not wish to include anything new, rather a continuation of existing good work, with the sorts of projects highlighted. However, there was no desire to discourage new applications.
- In the priorities support for projects and events should be included but not services.
- Greater use of the development control opportunities to secure open space was a matter for the Development Control Committee. It was noted that this was included in the Community Strategy. It was suggested that the Development Control Committee should have regard to the priorities in the Community Strategy, although it was noted that the Strategy had been fed into the Local Plan.

## Page 4

- It was suggested that both priorities should apply to all age groups.

## Page 5

- It was noted that Sutton Courtenay Parish Council had been asked to undertake a survey for an action plan. However, this had not been possible, not because of insufficient funding but because of insufficient volunteers to commit to the work.
- The priority relating to projects which encouraged town centre shopping should be amended to “town centre economic and social activity.”

## Page 6

- A priority should be added to include projects which enhance the built / green / natural environment.
- Also there should be a priority to save energy / recycle / guard against the local environment.
- It should be stated how the Committee would consider grant applications for works to trees and historic buildings.
- “Improving the quality of the local environment” should be removed from the “why these priorities” column and included in the “priorities” column and within that details of the sort of projects supported should be added, with an emphasis on community benefit being specified.

## Page 7

- An example which might be included was the Abingdon Bridge which gave advice on housing.

# Ab.32

## Page 8

- Delete reference to “database” and substitute with “information”.

## Page 9

- The priorities should not be age specific. However, it was suggested that in targeting young people to exercise would hopefully set a life long pattern for them.
- Exercise for all should be encouraged – it would benefit elderly people to remain healthy and it would encourage young people to take up exercise.

The Committee was asked to consider whether an Abingdon Area Forum should be convened to facilitate public consultation on the content of the prospectus. It was suggested that a meeting of the Forum might be convened to launch the prospectus and that consultation on an agreed document was inappropriate. Some concern was expressed at hosting one meeting of the Forum only. Reference was made to the letter received from Sutton Courtney parish Council as referred to elsewhere in these minutes and it was commented that expectations might be raised and further meetings of the Forum would be necessary.

Some Members commented that they could not see the benefit of holding meetings of the Forum as those organisations that would attend would most likely be aware of the ability to apply for grant assistance and would do so in any event.

It was suggested that presentations by groups who had received grant assistance might be interesting and informative.

It was questioned whether it would be beneficial for presentations to be made to schools, perhaps by hosting multi youth forums. It was reported that the extended school’s initiatives were gathering speed and presentations on grant aid might be possible through that avenue.

One Member commented that there seemed to be a general desire for meetings of the Forum and he questioned why they should not be held. He commented that meetings of the Forum would be the vehicle for discussing new projects and initiatives. However, the Committee was advised that the Council had agreed budget savings which required a 25% reduction in the number of meetings. Having regard to this it was considered that a one-off meeting of the Forum to launch the prospectus might be beneficial.

Consideration was given to strategic leadership and it was suggested that further consideration of this was needed at the next meeting of this Committee.

## *RESOLVED*

- that the Head of Innovation and Enterprise in consultation with all Members of the Committee be delegated authority to redraft the prospectus based on the comments now made;*
- that the Head of Innovation and Enterprise be asked to prepare a separate “user friendly” guide on the Committee’s priorities for support to the local community in 2006/07 taking on board any advice from the Council’s Head of Communications, to be circulated to all Members of the Committee for comment, such a guide to include details of the finance available and an indication of the type of projects supported;*
- that the possibility of holding one meeting of the Abingdon Area Forum specifically to launch the prospectus in the autumn of 2006 be discussed at the next meeting;*

# Ab.33

- (d) *that an item be included on the agenda for the next meeting asking the Committee to consider community leadership; and*
- (e) *that a presentation on the Extended School's Initiative be made to the next meeting of the Committee.*

Ab.41 URGENT BUSINESS - LETTER FROM SUTTON COURTENAY PARISH COUNCIL (BOUNDARY REVIEW / FORUM / OTHER MATTERS)

As referred to elsewhere in these minutes the Chair had agreed to the consideration of this item as a matter of urgent business.

The Committee received and considered a letter from Sutton Courtenay Parish Council dated 17 March 2006, a copy of which was circulated at the meeting.

The letter expressed concern that at one time Sutton Courtney had been within the area for the South East Forum and Committee. The parishes that used to comprise the South East area were rural parishes with issues and problems similar to Sutton Courtenay. Guest speakers had attended the forum meetings and the system had appeared very successful. The review of the area committee boundaries had taken place and Sutton Courtenay had been placed in the Abingdon area. Since that time the Parish Council had felt overshadowed by the Town and its events. It was explained that the District Councillors for the Abingdon Wards who served on the Abingdon Area Committee outnumbered the two Sutton Courtenay and Drayton Members. A recent check of the Minutes of this Committee for 1 February had shown a predominance of town matters and grants to town organisations, the town council and individuals. Sutton Courtenay Parish Council had therefore requested the following: -

- (a) that a recommendation should be made to the Council that a review of the boundaries of the area committee should take place in order to put similar parishes with similar issues together;
- (b) that the forum meetings should be introduced on a regular basis prior to the area committee meetings;
- (c) that, if appropriate, the following matters which affect the parish be discussed by the Area Committee: -
  - (i) the volume and impact of traffic that came with piecemeal planning applications;
  - (ii) the local council responses to planning applications and the value of their comments;
  - (iii) litter picking within the area, poor street cleansing and how it was being resolved.

The Committee was advised that a review of the boundaries of the area committees was not proposed at this time and it was considered unreasonable to undertake such a review at the request of one parish council only. However, it was commented that the views of parish councils were welcome.

In terms of hosting meetings of the forum, it was noted that the Council had agreed a budget cut which required a reduction in meetings by 25%, a reduction which had yet to be achieved.

In terms of predominance in considering town matters and grants to town organisations, the town council and individuals, it was commented that the Committee could only consider applications received.

With reference to litter picking, it was commented that parish councils had authority to undertake this. Some parish councils included an element in their parish precept to pay for this and it was suggested that Sutton Courtney Parish Council could do the same if they thought that litter picking was sufficiently important

*RESOLVED*

*that the letter be noted.*

**Exempt Information Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972**

None.

The meeting rose at 8.50 pm