

Ab.18

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE ABINGDON AREA COMMITTEE

HELD AT THE GUILDHALL,
ABINGDON ON TUESDAY, 25TH
MARCH, 2008 AT 7.00PM

Open to the Public, including the Press

PRESENT:

MEMBERS: Councillor Gervase Duffield, Pat Lonergan, Tim Smith, Beth Fleming, Janet Morgan, Richard Webber, Alison Rooke, Samantha Bowring, Paul Burton, Mary de Vere, Tony de Vere, Richard Gibson, Jim Halliday (Chair), Angela Lawrence, Julie Mayhew-Archer and Laurel Symons

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Carole Nicholl, Lorna Edwards and Toby Warren

NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 1

Ab.19 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Abingdon Area Committee held on 25 October 2007 were adopted and signed as a correct record.

Ab.20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were recorded from Councillors Gervase Duffield, Beth Fleming, Pat Lonergan, Janet Morgan and Timothy Smith.

Ab.21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of interest were made in respect of report 176/07 – Community Grants as follows: -

<u>Councillor</u>	<u>Type of Interest</u>	<u>Grant Applications</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Minute Ref</u>
Alison Rooke	Personal and Prejudicial	The Church of St Michael and All Angels, Abingdon	In so far as the Warden of the Church was a close friend.	Ab.25 (ii)
Jim Halliday	Personal	The Church of St Michael and All Angels, Abingdon	In that people associated with the Church were known to him.	Ab.25 (ii)
Jim Halliday	Personal	Abingdon and District Musical Society	Members of the Society were known to him.	Ab.25 (iii)

Laurel Symons	Personal	Abingdon and District Musical Society	In so far as she had attended many events hosted by this Society.	Ab.25 (iii)
Richard Webber	Personal	Abingdon and District Musical Society	In so far as he was the Chair of another musical organisation.	Ab.25 (iii)
Julie Mayhew Archer	Personal	Abingdon and District Musical Society	In so far as she had attended many events hosted by the Society as an invitee in her capacity as Chair of the Council.	Ab.25 (iii)
Jim Halliday	Personal	Abingdon Band	In so far as the Conductor was known to him and so were other members of the Band.	Ab.25 (iv)
Angela Lawrence Julie Mayhew Archer Alison Rooke Laurel Symons		Abingdon Band	In so far as they knew the conductor as an employee of the Town Council	Ab.25 (iv)
Richard Webber	Personal & prejudicial	Drayton Parish Council Street Cleansing	In so far as he was a member of the Parish Council.	Ab.25

Ab.22 URGENT BUSINESS AND CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

Ab.23 STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 32

None.

Ab.24 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING ORDER 32

Les Clyne, a resident of Abingdon asked the following question of the Chair of the Area Committee: -

“Will the Abingdon Area Committee please publicise the availability of its funds in 2008/2009 in the Abingdon herald and local community papers at least twice during 2008?”

The Chair thanked Mr Clyne and undertook to respond to him in writing within 10 working days.

Ab.25 COMMUNITY GRANTS

The Committee received and considered report 176/07 of the Strategic Director which set out the budget position for this Committee in respect of Community Grants for the remainder of 2007/08 and in 2008/09; invited Members to consider and determine the grant applications received since the last meeting; invited Members to decide on their principle for awarding grants towards additional parish cleansing in 2008/09 and asked the Committee to determine the applications received for this purpose.

The Committee noted an amendment to the report in that the full amount of two grant offers had not been taken up and therefore £226.34 could be added to the total budget.

Each of the applications were considered in details and the following comments made:

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(1) Grant Application - Sutton Courtenay Parish Council

Members supported the application noting that the existing map was several years old and in need of replacement. It was considered that a Parish map was very useful. In response to a question raised regarding the likely life span of the map, it was suggested that the parish Council should be advised to liaise with the Council Officers who might be able to provide information on weather resistant materials.

(2) Grant Application – The Church of St Michael and All Angels, Abingdon

Councillor Alison Rooke had declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this application and in accordance with Standing Order 34 she withdrew from the meeting during its consideration.

Councillor Jim Halliday had each declared a personal interest in this application and in accordance with Standing Order 34 he remained in the meeting during its consideration.

The Committee noted that the proposal would encourage a variety of community groups to use the facility.

Members supported the application noting the proposal would benefit the community. It was considered that it would be a well used facility in this part of Abingdon.

Some Members considered that the grant sought was relatively small compared to the overall cost. However, other Members considered that any grant awarded should be less than that sought. It was commented that it was thought that this Church was less active in the community than other churches

and that £8,000 was a large proportion of the total grants budget for this Committee for next year.

It was noted that the new facilities would hopefully enable the Church to be more active

One Member suggested that the applicant should be advised to seek a grant from Waste Recycling Environmental Limited (WREN).

It was considered that an informative should be added to the grant offer encouraging the applicant to apply to WREN for funding. It was noted that to qualify for a grant under the WREN scheme, it would be necessary for the applicant to have 11% third party funding. It was considered that the offer made by this authority might provide sufficient funding for this. However, Members agreed to keep in mind that another application to meet any shortfall might be presented to a future meeting.

(3) Grant Application – Abingdon and District Musical Society

Councillors Jim Halliday, Julie Mayhew Archer, Laurel Symons and Richard Webber had each declared a personal interest in this application and in accordance with Standing Order 34 they remained in the meeting during its consideration.

Further to the report, the Officers reported that balance for the Society for 2006/07 showed a deficit of £1,200.

Some Members expressed concern regarding the number of people that would benefit from the scheme. However it was noted that people from across the Vale attended the event.

Some Members considered that in effect the grant would subsidise the cost and that perhaps the membership fee should be increased, together with the price of tickets or costs in hosting the event reduced, it being noted that the event incurred a loss year on year. It was further suggested that the Society should consider fund raising and to this end, the Officer undertook to discuss this with the applicant.

However, it was noted that the Society hosted many concerts throughout the year and that this was an extra-ordinary event where quality performers were brought in at a higher cost. It was commented that in underwriting the event, these performances had helped in raising standards of performing arts in the Vale. It was commented that the amount sought was a small amount for a non sporting leisure pursuit.

(4) Grant Application – Sutton Courtenay Cricket Club

Members supported the application but considered that the Cricket Club should be advised to seek grant funding from Waste Recycling Environmental Limited (WREN).

(5) Grant Application - Abingdon Band

Councillors Jim Halliday, Angela Lawrence, Julie Mayhew Archer, Alison Rooke and Laurel Symons had each declared a personal interest in this application and in accordance with Standing Order 34 they remained in the meeting during its consideration.

Members supported the application noting that the Band encouraged young people to take an interest in music. Furthermore, it was noted that the Band undertook fund raising. It was commented that the Band attracted a wide age range of players and was a very active group.

(6) Principle of Awarding Parish Cleansing Grants

Councillor Richard Webber had declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this application and in accordance with Standing Order 34 he withdrew from the meeting during its consideration.

Councillor Alison Rooke the Vice-Chair took the Chair for this item.

It was considered that if parishes felt that they wished to have a higher standard of parish cleansing then they should pay for it themselves by way of increasing their parish precepts.

It was noted that as the parishes had set their budgets for the next financial year, the award of such grants should be phased out over two years rather than immediately ceasing.

One Member referred to the Council's Environmental Wardens who were available to give advice on how the community could keep their villages clean. It was suggested that the Officers should advise the Parish Councils of the existence of the Wardens and the advice available.

It was proposed by Councillor Tony de Vere, seconded by Councillor Richard Gibson that the parishes be advised in writing as soon as possible that it was intended that grants for parish cleansing would cease next year in view of the reduced level of grant funding now available and likely in the future.

By way of an amendment it was proposed by Councillor Jim Halliday, seconded by Councillor Alison Rooke that the parishes be advised in writing as soon as possible that it was intended that grants for parish cleansing would be phased out over the next two years in view of the reduced level of grant funding now available and likely in the future.

On being put to the vote this was agreed by 5 votes to 4 with 2 abstentions with the Chair having exercised her casting vote and 1 of the voting Members not being present during consideration of this item.

On being put the Substantive Motion was agreed by 10 votes to nil, with 1 of the voting Members not being present during consideration of this item.

It was considered that the letter to be sent to parishes should be drafted in consultation with the Vice-Chair of the Committee with the local Members being kept informed.

(7) Parish Cleansing Grant Application - Appleford Parish Council

It was considered that the Parish Council should be offered 75% of the grant sought in this case £600.

(8) Parish Cleansing Grant Application - Drayton Parish Council

It was considered that the Parish Council should be offered 75% of the grant sought in this case £487.50.

RESOLVED

- (a) *that the Committee's remaining budget for 2007/08 in the sum of £12,497.97 be noted;*
- (b) *that the grant applications received be determined as follows: -*

<u>Applicant</u>	<u>Reason for Grant</u>	<u>Agenda and Council Priority</u>	<u>Grant Awarded</u>
<i>Sutton Courtenay Parish Council</i>	<i>Towards the cost of a replacement map for the village.</i>	<i>Environmental Agenda, Town & Village Vitality priority</i>	<i>£500 (Proposed by Councillor Richard Gibson, seconded by Councillor Alison Rooke and agreed by 10 votes to nil with 1 of the voting members not having yet arrived at the meeting).</i>
<i>The Church of St Michael & All Angels, Abingdon</i>	<i>Towards the cost of essential repairs to a listed building and redevelopment of the</i>	<i>Environmental and Social Agendas, Town & Village Vitality priority</i>	<i>£6,000 with an informative encouraging the applicant to apply to WREN for funding. (Proposed by Councillor Angela</i>

	<i>Community Room.</i>		<i>Lawrence, seconded by Councillor Julie Mayhew Archer and agreed by 6 votes to 3 with 1 abstention and with 1 of the voting Member not being present during consideration of this item). Councillor Richard Gibson had proposed and Councillor Jim Halliday had seconded that a grant of £8,000 be offered. However, this was lost by 5 – 4 – 2 with the Chair having exercised his casting vote and with 1 of the voting Member not being present during consideration of this item.</i>
<i>Abingdon & District Musical Society</i>	<i>Towards potential losses on a concert.</i>	<i>Social Agenda, Town & Village Vitality priority</i>	<i>Up to £800 (Proposed by Councillor Jim Halliday, seconded by Councillor Alison Rooke and agreed by 8 votes to 3).</i>
<i>Sutton Courtenay Cricket Club</i>	<i>Towards the purchase of kit for young people on their Youth Development Programme.</i>	<i>Social Agenda, Town & Village Vitality priority</i>	<i>£470 (Proposed by Councillor Richard Gibson, seconded by Councillor Paul Burton and</i>

			<i>agreed by 11 votes to nil</i>
<i>Abingdon Band</i>	<i>Towards the purchase of instruments for use by new members.</i>	<i>Social Agenda, Town & Village Vitality priority</i>	<i>£1,000 (proposed by Councillor Richard Gibson, seconded by Councillor Angela Lawrence and agreed by 11 votes to nil)</i>

- (c) *that the Abingdon Area Committee's budget for 2008/09 in the sum of £25,997 be noted;*
- (d) *that the Executive be asked to approve the carrying forward of any unspent grant budget from 2007/08 into 2008/09 in respect of the Abingdon Area Committee;*
- (e) *that the principle for awarding grants for additional parish cleansing be agreed as follows (agreed by 9 vote to 1 with 1 of the voting Members being absent during consideration of this item): -*
 - (1) *that the parishes be advised in writing as soon as possible that it was intended that grants for parish cleansing would be phased out over the next two years in view of the reduced level of grant funding now available and likely in the future; and*
 - (2) *that the letter to be sent to parishes should be drafted in consultation with the Vice-Chair of the Committee with the local Members being kept informed.*
- (f) *that applications for additional parish cleansing grants in 2008/09 be determined as follows to be paid from the 2008/09 budget (proposed by Councillor Richard Gibson, seconded by Councillor Mary de Vere and agreed by 9 vote to 1 with 1 of the voting Members being absent during consideration of this item):*

<u>Applicant</u>	<u>Grant Awarded</u>
<i>Appleford Parish Council</i>	<i>£487.50</i>
<i>Drayton Parish Council</i>	<i>£600.00</i>

The Committee received and considered report 175/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer which provided information about the responses at the Abingdon Area Forum held on 14 November 2007 and the preparation of the Vale Sustainable Community Strategy.

It was commented that members of the public had appreciated an opportunity for discussion and debate. It was considered that the format of the Forum had been very successful and the Officers had gained lots of information about the sorts of issues which local people felt were important for the Vale in the future.

It was noted that the Officers had analysed the responses received to the issues and options report and that information was being used to put together a draft Vale Community Strategy. However, in discussion with Chair of this Committee it had been agreed that there should be a further Abingdon Area Forum to be held on Wednesday 30 April. It was considered that a further forum would give residents an opportunity to be involved again in learning about the proposed actions to address the issues discussed in the autumn. It was commented that there would be an electronic voting system.

Members agreed that the previous forum had been successful. However, the following comments were made: -

- The outcome was dependant on attendees.
- It was easy for specific interest groups to attend and influence the outcome.
- Persistent speakers should be prevented from not allowing others to take part.
- The Chair felt that it would have been beneficial to have a panel of Members to field questions rather than him alone.
- It was suggested that it might be beneficial to have an Officer from the Communications Team present at the Forum as well as Officers specialised in the likely issues to be discussed.
- It was suggested that written questions could be sought from the floor and those questions of interest generally should be answered first with more specific questions only relevant to a small number of people answered thereafter.

The Officers responded that public meetings attracted self interest groups but that it was important to let them have their say. It was commented that the outcome of the Forum would not result in the final outcome of what should be in the Strategy, but it was one form of public consultation which was very important

Notwithstanding this, the Officers sought to seek advice from the Head of Communications of how to facilitate a meaningful debate having regard to persistent and dominant speakers.

Furthermore, the Officers undertook to provide feedback from the last forum to the next.

Arising upon consideration of this matter, one Member suggested that there was a need to address the perception held by some people about Abingdon. He referred to paragraph 6.8 of the report noting that there was modest control of this but

emphasised that the Council should address the matter and consider with the Town and County Councils how best make the town centre revitalisation a priority.

One Member agreed commenting that there was a lot of negative publicity surrounding Abingdon and that people would start to believe this. She emphasised that it was important for the Council to put out positive messages.

Another Member commented that advertising should be improved and she was surprised at the lack of information held by many people. She commented that much of the information which Members took for granted was not known by an ordinary member of the public.

RESOLVED

that the report be noted.

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

None.

The meeting rose at 9.05 pm