



Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held Monday 27th March 2023

Draft Minutes – yet to be approved.

34 persons present.

1. Introduction:

Introduction by the Mayor of Axminster, Cllr Jill Farrow who warmly welcomed all those present to the Annual Parish Meeting and highlighted the fire safety procedure and fire exits.

2. Apologies:

Apologies received from Cllrs. Holt, Brooker and Huskisson

Also, from Jane Rocket of the Chamber of Commerce.

3. Minutes of the last meeting:

Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held on Monday 4th April 2022 were considered and noted. Cllr. Farrow proposed the adoption of the minutes, seconded by Cllr. Walden. These were resolved unanimously by those present by way of a vote. Cllr. Farrow will sign the minutes as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

4. No matters arising from the previous minutes

5. To receive presentations from community groups and organisations:

6. To receive presentations from Axminster Climate Action Group (and associates):

Axminster Climate Action Group

Cllr. Farrow invited Birnie Steadman to open the night with a presentation from Axminster Climate Action Group (ACAG). Birnie began with a brief explanation of her background as a former teacher at Axe Valley and lead on to introduce ACAG and how it was started. She highlighted the importance of actively doing something to improve the future for our children.

Continued overleaf





Students from Axe Valley Academy

The students from Axe Valley, Ezra, Amelia, Olivia, Corbin and Caitlyn began their presentation about what they would like to see in Axminster over the next few years and shared some of the initiatives that they have already implemented in the school. The students covered topics including reducing waste, conserving water, recycling, litter picking, green energy and projects to help nature such as tree planting and swift bricks in new houses.

Cllr. Farrow congratulated the students on such a wonderful and enlightening presentation and thanked them for their attendance at the meeting.

Plastic Free Axminster

Kay Pike introduced Plastic Free Axminster and the work it has been undertaking over the past year. Kay thanked Axminster Town Council for the grant funding and also commended the council on its efforts to reduce the volume of single-use plastics in its day-to-day operation. Kay highlighted the important links Plastic Free Axminster have throughout the community from schools to local business. Kay shared some initiatives that have been brought in such as the 'Boomerang scheme' which aims to reduce single-use plastic bags by providing an alternative material bag which has kindly been sewn by the All Saints Quilters, so far 10 local retailers are trailing the scheme. Kay also touched upon the 'Refill Scheme' which would see local business register for a sticker that can be displayed to signal that reusable drink containers can be used and refilled at the establishment, helping to massively cut down on single-use bottles and cups. Plastic Free Axminster have had a busy year spreading awareness through talks and craft sessions at the Library, Axe Valley Show and local voluntary clubs for people of all ages as well as their regular litter picking around town.

Cllr. Farrow thanked Kay for her tireless work and for attending this evening.

7. Standing for Election in May 2023 as a Town or District Councillor:

Cllr. Farrow gave a brief summary of how the council has been formed over the past few years and how some of its current members have been co-opted since the last election but explained that a contested election is better for democracy. Cllr. Farrow encouraged all those present at the meeting to consider standing for election.

Sarah, Town Council Administrator, then ran through the criteria and application process for both East Devon District Elections and Axminster Town Council Elections due to take place on 4th May 2023. Sarah gave important information about who can propose and second a candidates application to stand, stressing the importance of delivering completed packs to the Returning Officer at Blackdown House, Honiton before 4 pm on the 4th of April 2023. Sarah confirmed that more information was available on Axminster Town Council and East Devon District Councils websites and that application packs were available from the Town Council Offices in the Guildhall

Cllr. Farrow thanked Sarah for the information provided.

Continued overleaf





8. The Town Mayor's 2022/2023 report.

Cllr. Farrow gave a verbal report to the meeting outlining her past year as Mayor of Axminster outlining the highlights and the challenges she had met over the past year. A summary of Cllr. Farrow's presentation can be found on our website.

9. To receive the following annual reports from committee chairs:

Employment Committee

Cllr. Sedgewick gave a verbal report on how the Council's employment matters had gone this year. Outlining the purpose of the Employment Committee detailing the new appointments made to the council's staff this year. A summary of Cllr. Sedgewick's presentation can be found on our website.

Operations Committee

Cllr. Walden gave a verbal report on the various areas covered by the Operations Committee. He began with a rundown on the current allotments held by the council and the re-mapping process currently underway. Cllr Walden highlighted the changes made to the Allotment Regulations that have seen the addition of a £100 deposit. Cllr. Walden explained that the aim was to deter people from abandoning their plots to become untidy and overgrown, which will go hand in hand with a more proactive approach from the council going forward. He mentioned the shorter-than-usual waiting list and encouraged those in attendance to contact the office if they are interested in being added to the list.

Turning to the cemetery, Cllr. Walden explained how the staff have undertaken training in monument maintenance which will enable the 1,500 monuments that we have in the cemetery to be safety checked yearly. Cllr. Walden gave prior warning that these safety checks may result in some areas being temporarily taped off while any unsafe monuments await professional attention.

Cllr. Walden explained that the new bench had now been put in front of the library and this will be the last bench placed for some time as the town has now had a considerable amount placed. Cllr Walden said that having a good number of benches is even more important now that we are having more people walking into town rather than using their cars. Maintenance will obviously continue, and the council are still open to suggestions if you feel an area is in need of a bench.

Moving on to Jubilee Field, Cllr. Walden made reference to the steady progress on the field including all the new amenity that has been added since it was handed over to the council, Cllr. Walden went through the plan to get the path extended as well as a wildflower and shrub planting to promote wildlife in the area.

Cllr. Walden finished his presentation with an invitation to residents to submit any suggestions they have to the council offices in the Guildhall.

Continued overleaf



Planning Committee

Cllr. Leat gave a brief presentation on the work of the Planning Committee this year. She commented on how quiet the year had been and explained that this is largely due to building restrictions imposed by Natural England because of high phosphate levels in the River Axe. A summary of her presentation can be seen on our website.

Strategy and Finance Committee

Cllr. Farrow gave a verbal report outlining the work the Strategy and Finance Committee had undertaken over the past year. Brief details of the Guildhall renovation project and the Risk Management process along with many others. A summary of the presentation is available on our website.

10. To receive a report from the Chair of the Guildhall Management Committee.

Matt Young, Chair of the Guildhall Management Committee, gave a brief run-through of the past year mentioning the renovations to the Guildhall and the new appointment of Leigh Conley as manager. Matt congratulated Leigh on the incredible effort he had put in since taking up the role and the excellent bookings that had been secured since his appointment. Matt also highlighted the positive effect such big bookings had made on fellow business owners in town with 44 productions and events already booked for 2023/24. Matt outlined the regular classes as well as the community groups using the hall. Matt thanked the Council for its continued financial support and confirmed that the accounts for the Guildhall are all up to date, and in an improved position from last year. A full summary of Matt's report can be found on our website.

Election to the Guildhall Management Committee:

Matt Young then invited nominations to fill the vacancies on the Guildhall Management Committee, 2 Councillor trustee positions and 2 trustee positions for members of the public.

Cllr. Lippett was co-opted onto the Committee after being proposed by Cllr. Farrow and voted on by those present

Matt asked the meeting if any members of the public would like to join the committee, there were no volunteers at this point.

Cllr. Farrow thanked Cllr. Lippett for joining the committee and thanked Matt Young for his presentation.

Cllr. Farrow also asked Francesca from Nub News to note that members of the public are needed for The Guildhall Committee.

Continued overleaf





11. Parish Footpaths/P3

Cllr. Farrow extended thanks to John Vanderwolfe for filling the role of Honorary Footpath Warden as a voluntary position for many years.

Cllr. Farrow asked for an update from Sarah on the Annual Parish Footpath Survey. Sarah confirmed that it has been completed and all relevant issues have been raised with Devon County Council. Sarah also confirmed that the P3 Grant Funding Application to Devon County Council had been compiled.

Cllr. Farrow thanked Sarah for this information.

12. Open Public Forum

Cllr. Farrow opened the public forum to members of the public and invited people to step forward.

Caroline Jefferies stood to speak on a point her son had made earlier in the presentation from Axe Valley on 'Swift Bricks'. Caroline asked that people sign the petition on the UK Government and Parliament website (<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/626737>)

Cllr. Farrow thank her for her important contribution.

No further speakers. The public forum was closed.

13. To consider any demands to hold a parish poll as requested by those present in accordance with paragraph 18 (Schedule 12) of the Local Government Act 1972.

No requests were made for a Parish Poll by those present. Cllr. Farrow Closed this section of the meeting.

14. A closing statement by Town Mayor, Cllr. Jill Farrow.

Cllr. Jill Farrow brought the meeting to a close with a speech thanking the Councillors for their work over the past year. Also, thanks were given to the countless volunteers who work tirelessly for Axminster all year round. Cllr. Farrow remarked on how Axminster truly is the home of community spirit.

Cllr. Sedgewick offer her thanks to Cllr. Farrow for the dedication and love she has shown to the role of Mayor.

Cllr. Farrow thanked Cllr. Sedgewick for her kind words and thanked all for attending this evening.

With no other business to attend to, the chair brought the meeting to a close at 9pm.