

Axminster Town Council

Office Hours
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday
10am – 12 noon

Mayor: Cllr Jill Farrow
Town Clerk: Paul Hayward

www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk



THE GUILDHALL
WEST STREET
AXMINSTER
DEVON
EX13 5NX

Tel. 01297 32088

Email: Clerk@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk

Axminster Town Council: Minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Sub-Committee

DRAFT MINUTES – YET TO BE APPROVED; Part ONE Minutes (Redacted)

Held in person on Thursday 11th January 2024. Meeting started at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Burrough (KB), Dowdeswell (MD), Leat (SL) and Lippett (RL).
Also attending as advisory committee member (non-voting): Leigh Conley.
(*Meeting was declared as quorate*).

Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (PH). Deputy Clerk, Sarah Jackson (SJ)
No members of the public in attendance.

***Clerk welcomed all in attendance and ran through meeting procedure and protocol.
Clerk highlighted the building fire precautions and alerted those present to the fire exits.***

***In the absence of the Chair of the Committee (Cllr. David Willey), it was proposed by MD
that SL take the Chair for the duration of the meeting. Seconded by RL. Resolved.***

Public Forum session.

No public representations.
No members of the Sub-Committee wished to speak in public forum.
As such, Clerk closed the Public Forum session at 7.05pm

GSC23/014

To note members of Sub-Committee present:

Attendance at meeting shown above. Meeting was quorate.

GSC23/015

To note and, if thought fit, to approve apologies for absence and reasons therefore:

Apologies received from Cllr. Bruce (DB) due to a conflicting engagement.
Apologies received from Cllr. Walden (JW) Unwell.
Apologies received from Cllr. Willey (DW) Unwell.
Apologies received from Matt Young (MY) Unwell.

Absence approved by Acting-Chair, seconded by KB. Resolved.

Continued overleaf.

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GSC23/016

To note members of Sub-Committee not otherwise present and to receive any other apologies for absence:

None.

GSC23/017

To receive any declarations of interest from members of the Sub-Committee in relation to items of business on this agenda and to note any dispensations previously afforded:

A declaration at this point does not preclude the need for members to declare any additional interests that may arise during this meeting.

SL declared an "Affects Non-Registerable Interest (NRI)" as a member of Axminster Drama Club and as a Trustee of the same organisation who owned the building immediately adjacent to the Guildhall. Noted.

GSC23/018

To consider and, if thought fit, approve the minutes of the Guildhall Sub-Committee meeting held 30th October 2023 and to consider any matters arising (*not included within this agenda as business to be attended to.*)

Proposed by Acting-Chair, seconded by KB. Resolved.

No matters arising.

GSC23/019

To consider any matters listed on this agenda that Councillors consider should be dealt with as confidential business as per the provisions of The Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960: None raised by Sub-Committee members other than to note those items already listed on this agenda.

GSC23/020

Financial Matters:

- a) To consider and review the draft Guildhall Profit and Loss Forecast / Income & Expenditure estimates for FY24-25 (as per deferral from Strategy & Finance Committee) and to make revisions (and subsequent recommendations) to S&FComm. accordingly.
Received and noted.

Continued overleaf.

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b) To consider financial out-turn report from RFO.
Received and noted.

c) To consider a recommendation from S&FComm. to alter bar prices at the Guildhall venue.

Some additional work was needed to benchmark prices locally (and at other similar venues) but members recognised that the proposed VAT registration for the GH venue would necessitate an increase in bar prices regardless so it was agreed to pass this matter to the Chair of the Committee, the Guildhall Manager and the RFO (in conjunction with the Deputy Clerk) to bring forward a proposal for an “across-the-board” price rise to ensure that the cost of bar sales remained competitive and did not deter customers, but that also reflected rising costs from suppliers and the future requirement to add VAT to drink and refreshment sales (albeit that the Council could then reclaim the VAT element of the purchase price commensurately). **Proposed by Acting-Chair. Resolved unanimously.**

d) To consider future plans for asset acquisition (and associated budgeting/expenditure challenges) and building improvements / refurbishment funding.
In the absence of the Chair of the committee, the Acting-Chair proposed that this topic be deferred to a future meeting of the sub-committee. Agreed unanimously.

GSC23/021

Business to be considered by this Sub-Committee:

a) To elect a Vice-Chair for this Sub-Committee.

Acting-Chair proposed that this matter be deferred to the next meeting of the Sub-Committee. Resolved.

b) To note that Cllr. Lippett has joined the Sub-Committee as a voting member by resolution of the Council.

Noted. Clerk advised that a request to join the Sub-Committee had been received from a hirer of the Guildhall (as a non-voting advisory member) and Acting-Chair asked that this matter be added to the next meeting agenda for consideration.

c) To consider whether hire charges / booking charges should be increased for FY24-25. Sub-Committee members asked the Guildhall Manager to undertake some local benchmarking of similar sized venues in the local area (including those in private ownership and management) to ensure that the building hire charges were competitively priced but not to such a degree that users were dissuaded from hiring the rooms/hall space. Noted.

LC: Please report back to the committee with your findings and research.

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d) To consider whether the Guildhall venue should acquire a logo or brand.

It was generally agreed that a brand could be useful to promote the Guildhall “business” and Acting-Chair asked members present to let the GH Manager have any ideas for designs, colours, fonts etc so that a draft design could be brought together. Whilst this isn’t the most pressing of matters for the GH, it was felt that it should not be discounted. Topic deferred for discussion in the future.

e) To consider proposals for upgrading of Guildhall Fire and Intruder alarm systems to incorporate enhanced coverage zones, and also personal security/safety features.

Clerk advised that he was waiting for one other formal quote to arrive and that he would then discuss the matter with the Chair of the Committee to bring this subject to a conclusion so that GSC could make a recommendation to FULL Council for the necessary spend on critical building infrastructure. Noted.

f) To consider proposals for upgrade/acquisition of venue AV/Lighting facilities to promote and encourage additional acts/performances.

It was acknowledged by all members that the potential investment in lighting and AV assets was a subject that could occupy a huge swathe of any meeting as each building user had differing demands and requirements and that acceding to them all was impossible; it was felt to be more important to have a comprehensive offering that suited the majority of hirers and maximised the potential of the building and the space available to attract hire profile and “more demanding” artists. The debate also covered the possibility of acquiring such assets second-hand to minimise costs and whilst this would be advantageous financially, there would be risks from the use of second-hand equipment that carried no warranty or guarantees.

It was agreed that the GH tech operative would be invited to the next meeting to outline their thoughts on the subject and allow a frank debate on what could be afforded, what was needed, what was wanted and what could wait until the GH finances were on a firmer footing. Clerk: Please action accordingly and extend the invitation.

g) To consider building/site storage challenges (as identified) and opportunities for solutions. Members debated the challenges facing the venue regarding storage of equipment, assets and amenity items (chairs, tables etc) in correlation with the changing hire patterns of the venue. After a lengthy discussion, the Acting-Chair asked that this subject be brought back to the next meeting of the sub-committee with additional data and financial information so that members could consider the matter further. Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

Continued overleaf.

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h) To consider any training needs identified for staff and volunteers.

It was agreed that any volunteer/member training requirements should be identified by the GH Manager and the costs discussed between the GHM and the RFO.

LC/Clerk: Please note and liaise accordingly.

i) To consider matters pertaining to building licensing.

Clerk/GHM updated members on building licensing issues re: security, occupancy and food hygiene requirements especially where third parties were hiring the venue and bringing their own produce/food for sale or consumption. Noted.

j) To consider matters pertaining to building CCTV and surveillance protocols.

Clerk confirmed that the building CCTV (int. & ext.) is only for the prevention of ASB and crime and for playback / review in the event of a notifiable incident and that the system should not be used for staff monitoring / time management nor “real-time” observation of any party (unless deemed necessary by the Data Controller [Clerk] who has the necessary licence and accreditation (SIA) to perform that function as per statutory GDPR legislation). Noted.

GSC23/022

To consider any matters considered as urgent by presiding Chair for discussion or notation only.

The subject of parking availability at the Guildhall was raised again by GHM and Acting-Chair asked that this matter be considered when the sub-committee next met in February.

GSC23/023

To consider date of next meeting of the Guildhall Sub-Committee.

The next scheduled meeting of the sub-committee was due on the 5th February but Clerk asked that this be deferred until later in that month to allow time for the additional information requested in this meeting to be gathered in and collated. Clerk to therefore liaise with members of the GSC and the Chair to consider an alternative date – perhaps 19th February or the 26th?

GSC23/024 & 025

Acting-Chair and Clerk suggested that the employment matter referred to on the agenda should better be discussed at the next Employment Committee meeting rather than by the GSC. As such, there was no need to proceed with the two agenda items above (024 and 025). Noted.

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With no further business to attend to, the Acting-Chair closed the meeting at 9.25pm thanking all in attendance for their patience, contribution and time.

Signed Date

Minutes of the meeting of the Guildhall Sub-Committee

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Held in person on Thursday 11th January 2024. Meeting started at 7.00 p.m.

Guildhall Sub-Committee Recommendations from meeting held Thursday 11th January 2024 that require ratification by Full Council

None.

