

MINTUES OF AXMINSTER ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

HELD AT 7.30 P.M. ON TUESDAY, 24<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2018

AT AXMINSTER GUILDHALL

PRESENT: Town Mayor: Cllr. J. W. Walden  
Councillors: C.A. Doherty, P.G. Hayward, D.R.H. Hull,  
Mrs. S.L.N. Leat, Mrs. S.R. Spiller,  
B.R. Watson and A.L. Young.

The Town Clerk (Miss H. Kirkcaldie) and the Deputy Town Clerk (Mrs. Z. Adamson-Drage).  
18 Members of the public.  
0 representative of the Press.  
No representatives of Devon and Cornwall Police

**1. OPENING OF MEETING:** The Town Mayor, Cllr. Walden, welcomed the public. Presentations of Former Mayor badges were made to those former incumbents of that office able to be present. The badges had been the initiative of Cllr. D.R.H. Hull. Cllr. Walden said that photographs of the Mayors and details of their terms of office were on display in the Churchill Room.

**2. APOLOGIES:** Cllrs. L.A. Rowe.

**3. MINUTES OF 2017 ANNUAL PARISH MEETING:** these had been circulated. Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Hayward, proposed that they be approved.

**4. POLICE REPORT:** None.

**5. GUEST SPEAKERS' PRESENTATION:** none - on account of the change in date of the meeting caused by the severe weather in mid-March.

**6. TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT:** Cllr. Walden said that it had been a challenging year. He began by welcoming the ever-improving floral displays around the town and paid thanks to the volunteers who did the hard work of planting them up and maintaining them. He marked the retirement from the Town Council of four long-serving members who had put in a total of 105 years service to the town between them. He said that Pippins now housed the activities of 36 different organisations across the week, an indication of its role as a hub for the community. Another community success had been the various activities staged by Light Up Axminster, ranging from the Cherry Fayre to a Halloween lantern parade and the Christmas Lights switch on. These activities had been particularly successful in engaging with younger members of the community.

On a sadder note, Cllr. Walden paid tribute to the late Robin Cross who had been School Caretaker for many years as well as being involved in the Special Constabulary and numerous other activities. In his memory the Town Council had created the Robin Cross Memorial Award and Mr. A.G. Enticott had been the first recipient. Another matter for regret in the community was the withdrawal of Sixth Year provision at the secondary school, something which had been hard fought-for. It was hoped that the situation might be reversed in the future.

The previous month had brought two spells of very cold, snowy weather and Cllr. Walden paid tribute to Mr. H.J.A. Jeffery and his team of volunteers for their sterling work in clearing roads and pavements in these difficult conditions.

The Mayor then spoke of the problems faced by those in the town who were in poverty and the efforts made by many organisations to provide help. He said that the Precept had been increased to enable

the Town Council to provide better services for the residents, particularly in areas where higher authorities had withdrawn from such provision.

He concluded by thanking his fellow Councillors and the Town Council staff for their support during the past year.

**7. REPORT FROM CHAIRMAN OF AMENITIES COMMITTEE:** Cllr. Walden began his report by welcoming the fact that there had been a good occupancy level and said that the Town Council had been more robust in ensuring that tenants kept their plots in good order. Referring next to the bus shelters, he said that the bus shelter on Chard Road would shortly become redundant and he hoped that it would be possible to move it to Millwey Avenue. Three new notice boards had been installed in the town centre and it is hoped to move one located previously at Poplar Mount Car Park up to Raymonds Hill to replace the one there. The planned programme of seat replacement/refurbishment had continued as and when the Handyman has the time. The lights on the Jubilee Fountain had been brought back into working order as part of the Light Up Axminster group's initiatives but there is a problem with the timing mechanism which still needs to be resolved. It had not proved possible to progress matters at the Jubilee Field as the developers had been far from co-operative regarding this area. Another area in which progress had been slow was in respect of establishing precisely how much money had accrued from Section 106 Agreements and until this was known it would not be possible to call for proposals from the public.

Cllr. Walden concluded his report by thanking the Handyman for all his work and the office staff for their support.

**8. REPORT FROM CHAIRMAN OF CEMETERY COMMITTEE:** Cllr. Mrs. Spiller opened her report by stating that the Town Council's aim was to keep the Cemetery in good order. She said that a new ride-on mower had been bought during the year and paid thanks to Mr. Jeffery for the maintenance of the Cemetery machinery which he carries out in a voluntary capacity. Tasks such as cutting of hedge, strimming and grass cutting are carried out by the Cemetery Caretaker with assistance from the town Handyman.

Another aspect of the Cemetery Committee's work is to review and update the regulations and other documents associated with necessary administration.

The Cemetery Committee Chairman finished by thanking her fellow members and the staff for their support during the year.

**9. REPORT FROM CHAIRMAN OF OLD COURTHOUSE COMMITTEE:** Cllr. Hayward said that it had been a year of change with new tenants in some areas and others having become available to let. He said that it was always a challenge to maintain an old building, with problems ranging from leaky roofs to leaky taps. He paid tribute to Cllrs. Godbeer and Moulding who had stood down from the Town Council recently but had been long-serving members of the Old Courthouse Committee. He urged members of the public to enjoy the tranquillity of the garden and thanked Mr. Briant for his dedicated work in looking after it and the Town Council staff for their work in relation to the site.

**10. REPORT FROM HONORARY FOOTPATH WARDEN:** Mr. Vanderwolfe's gave details of the recent Annual Footpath Surveys, explaining that of the 51 paths in the parish, had passed the annual inspection. Matters which need to be resolved are the provision of a bridge on F.P. 42, muddy conditions on F.P. 48 and 55 and the continued temporary line for F.P. 80

He concluded with his annual plea for those with dogs to keep them on leads and to leave gates shut. Cllr. Walden thanked Mr. Vanderwolfe for his over-seeing of matters relating to public rights of way.

**11. AXMINSTER COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE REPORT:** Dist. Cllr. Moulding said that the draft plan documents were with the consultants who were finalising the policies and linking these to supporting evidence. Sections of the plan which had been reviewed and modified over the year had been the Homes and Housing Section, the Transport Section and the future developments possible on the Websters' Garage site. A recent announcement of a £10 million grant from the Housing Infrastructure Fund towards the North/South Relief Road had been welcomed and it was hoped that this would

encourage the production of a Strategic Masterplan for the proposed development site to the east of Axminster.

Once the draft plan has been finalised, further public consultation will take place and the plan will then be presented to the planning authority.

**12. COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:** in a written report, Cllr. Moulding said that he was standing down at the elections in May but that it had been a privilege to serve as Chairman of the County Council for the past year and as ward member for eight years. He then went on to mention the changes to the ward boundaries which would be coming into effect at the May elections, the need to increase the County Council budget by 5% to cover the increased cost of Adult Social Care and the provision of other services. Moving on to more local topics he spoke of the flawed decision to close in-patient beds in Seaton and Honiton in addition and the need to fight these following the promise that their closure in Axminster would be to protect those in Seaton and welcomed the opening of the permissive path to which reference had been made earlier in the meeting.

**13. DISTRICT COUNCILLOR'S REPORT:** Cllr. Moulding, in a written report, spoke first of the Council's budget which had been increased by £5 per year for a band D property to £131.78, one of the lowest levels in the country. He said that an excellent range of services was provided for residents. Going on to mention his various responsibilities as a Councillor, Cllr. Moulding said that many of these were not related directly to Axminster though others, such as asset management, many have an Axminster element to them.

#### **14. AXMINSTER GUILDHALL:**

**a) Chairman's Annual Report** – Mr. Spurway opened his report by welcoming the fact that the financial outlook had improved since his previous report. He said that many hirers had returned and new ones recruited, with activities ranging from baby classes to various dance groups. He said that there had been more tribute bands. A new initiative was to charge some commercial events a percentage of their takings, rather than a flat hire fee. A weekly calendar of events is displayed on the board outside the venue.

Mr. Spurway then said that it was the Manager's dream to have a well-decorated and professionally equipped Guildhall which can cater for any event. Towards this end she liaises regularly with the Town Council, which owns the building to discuss how the building can be improved and how this can be funded. Among the items on her wish list are new carpets, interior decoration and improvements to the bar. However, anything which is a safety matter must receive priority. The Management Committee is always conscious of new and existing competition.

Mr. Spurway paid tribute to the work of all the staff and his fellow Committee members and thanked them for their support and concluded by giving special mention to Mr. Fells who had been a stalwart member of the Committee and, indeed, its Chairman until forced to stand down through ill health.

**b) Annual Accounts:** Unaudited Management Accounts had been circulated which showed an improvement on the previous year. Cllr. Watson, seconded by Cllr. Doherty proposed that these be adopted. Agreed. A special meeting will be called once the Auditor has prepared the final accounts.

**c) Election of Committee for Coming Year** – Cllr. Mrs. Leat indicated that she was willing to stand for election but wanted the public to be aware that she had an interest to declare as the Secretary of Axminster Drama Club which is a regular hirer of the Guildhall.

The following people, duly proposed and seconded, were elected to the Committee:

Town Council Representatives – Cllrs. C.A. Doherty, P.G. Hayward, D.R.H. Hull, Mrs. S.N.L. Leat, D.J. Moore and B.R. Watson. A further two members will be co-opted later.

Community Representatives – C. Furse, T.M. Leat, M.D.G. Spurway and Z. Watt were elected, duly proposed and seconded.

**15. OPEN DISCUSSION:**

**a) Section 106 Moneys:** A resident sought information as to when the Section 106 Moneys would be available for organisations to submit bids. The Town Clerk said that this could not happen until the District Council had clarified the financial situation. The Town Mayor said that he was hopeful that this would have been achieved in time for the promised vote in June.

**b) Litter:** A resident felt that it would be beneficial if a litter-pick day were to be held.

**c) Condition of Roads:** several residents commented on the deplorable condition of the roads.

**d) Local Hospitals:** Cllr. Walden sought, and was given, the support of those present to speak at a meeting of the District Council in favour of its policy to ensure that the hospital sites continue to function as health hubs despite the loss of beds in many cases. Cllr. Hull commended the number of services being provided at the hospital, as detailed on the leaflet prepared by the Hospital League of Friends.

The meeting closed at 9.05

Signed ..... Date .....