

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
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Tel. 01297 32088

Email: Clerk@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk

Minutes of the meeting of the Operations Committee held on Tuesday, 12th April 2022 at 7.30 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall

Minutes approved at OPSCOMM meeting held 3rd May 2022

Meeting began at 7.30pm due to the over-run of a previous event.
Chair, Cllr. Walden, welcomed all in attendance and outlined fire precautions, exits etc.

Public Forum:

No public representations.

Chair closed public forum session at 7.35pm.

OC22/078

To note those members of the committee present:

Present: Cllr. Walden (JW) (Chair), Cllr. Spurway (MS) (Vice-Chair), Cllrs. Brooker A (ABr.), Holt (SH) and Sedgewick (AS). **(Meeting was declared quorate)**

Also, the Town Clerk (LTC) (Paul Hayward).

No members of the public. No members of the press.

OC22/079

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

Apologies received from committee member, Cllr. Farrow (conflicting engagement).

Apologies received from committee member, Cllr. Mynard (ongoing health matter).

Apologies received from committee member, Cllr. Paice (unwell).

Approval of apology (and reason) proposed by Chair, seconded MS. Resolved unanimously.

OC22/080

To note members who were neither present nor had previously given their apologies, and to receive any other apologies of absence:

Chair noted that Cllr. Burrough (who had been appointed to the committee at the previous meeting of the Full Council [11/4/22]) was not present. Chair asked that the Council's website be amended to reflect the revised membership. Noted.

OC22/081

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

AS & MS both declared a personal interest in agenda item OC22/084 as Councillor members of the Guildhall Management Committee.

At the FULL Council meeting held 14/02/2022, Cllr. Farrow was afforded a dispensation* to discuss and vote upon matters pertaining to parish allotments. This dispensation applies until May 2023 (unless rescinded prior to that date) and was afforded in respect of Cllr. Farrow's disclosable pecuniary interests as set out in the Register of Members Interests. * *Localism Act 2011 (s.33)*.

Continued Overleaf.

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OC22/082

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Operations Committee meeting held 1st March 2022 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes:

Approval of minutes proposed by Chair, seconded by AS. Resolved unanimously.

Minutes reviewed and noted. No matters arising raised.

Chair to sign minutes as a true record of that meeting's business.

OC22/083

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 (Admissions to meetings) Act 1960:

None proposed other than those already listed as being discussed in Part TWO session on the published agenda.

OC22/084

To consider matters pertaining to the Axminster Guildhall building and curtilage:

i) **It was proposed by SH, seconded by Chair, that no external ladder store be constructed but that hooks, anchor points and locks be installed to the right-hand elevation of the building (underneath the fire escape) to provide a storage area for the aluminium ladders once the external CCTV had been installed to provide image capture for that area; installation to be delegated to the Clerk to arrange. Resolved unanimously.**

ii) The Clerk was directed to obtain quotations for hire of lobby matting from various suppliers to negate the need to purchase and clean the items ourselves. Noted.

iii) Clerk was directed to obtain quotes for the removal of the yellow disabled "hatched" markings nearest the building (Bay 5) with the hatching replaced between bays 4 and 5 with an additional "wheelchair icon" marking to create an additional dedicated disabled parking bay.

The recommendation to proceed with this action was proposed by SH, seconded by AS. Resolved unanimously. Noted.

iv) **It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that the Council contribute £10,000 towards the costs of the replacement curtains, tracking and mechanical pulley system at the Guildhall subject to a further contribution of £6000 from the Guildhall Management Committee.**

Resolved unanimously. As this expenditure is beyond the powers of the Committee's Terms of Reference and the Council's extant Standing Orders/Financial Regulations, this recommendation must be put before FULL Council for approval at the next opportunity. Noted.

Continued Overleaf.

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OC22/085

To consider matters pertaining to the Old Courthouse (OCH) complex:

i) It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that expenditure of up to £400 be approved for the creation of further garden amenity to include the (previously approved) pergola at the eastern end of the garden (opposite the doctor's surgery building) and additional trellis panels to encourage plant growth. Resolved unanimously. Delivery of garden amenity improvement delegated to Clerk to execute in addition that approved previously (ie additional benches, garden improvements etc).

ii) It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that the Committee supported "in principle" the installation of CCTV cameras (and the necessary recording equipment) onto the Old Courthouse building to provide tenant security and exterior crime prevention measures (in conjunction with the Town Centre "Safer Towns" funded CCTV system) but subject to a further report coming before OPSCOMM in relation to:

- a) Capital Funding costs
- b) Ongoing maintenance and running costs
- c) Details of listed building/planning consents required by the Local Planning Authority (EDDC). Resolved unanimously.

Clerk was directed to obtain said quotes and other details and return back to OPSCOMM at the earliest opportunity for a further consideration of this matter. Noted.

OC22/086

To consider matters pertaining to Section 106 projects ongoing:

i) Chair proposed that the climbing wall previously proposed for Raymonds Hill (Cooks Lane) under S106 grant funding be re-sited at the Jubilee Field for the following reasons:

- a) Uncertainty over lease agreements with site owner and costs of obtaining such a lease on private land.
- b) Rapidly increasing costs not covered by the S106 funding agreement for necessary security and safety measures on that site.
- c) Ongoing concerns over both traffic and site safety for facility users and guests.
- d) Uncertainty over actual potential benefit to Axminster residents in this location.

Seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously.

This matter was also discussed at FULL Council on 11th April 2022 – see FC22/092(IC).

Clerk: Please commence liaison with EDDC S106 officer to make the necessary arrangements.

OC22/087

To consider matters pertaining Town Centre development and regeneration:

i) Town Centre Signage project:

a) Gateway Signage (x4) at Town entrance points.

It was recognised that the existing signage was in poor condition and was not a fitting or appropriate welcome to visitors and should be replaced as a matter of some urgency.

SH outlined some suggestions in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce and the Heritage Centre which could reflect the town's carpet-making heritage but also reflect the new economy in the town. SH offered to gather together some external input and bring back to OPSCOMM for further debate. Clerk was directed to speak to DCC Highways Officer to ascertain the whereabouts of the missing gateway sign from the old Rendell's site on Chard Road. Noted

Continued Overleaf.

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OC22/087

To consider matters pertaining Town Centre development and regeneration:

i) Town Centre Signage project (continued):

b) Consideration of design and style for town centre replacement finger-posts and signage. It was suggested, after consultation with the Dementia Friendly Axminster group, that black text on a yellow background would be ideal, but that it may not find favour with the EDDC Conservation officer. An alternative suggestion was black lettering on a gold background with a black border for aesthetics and a black post with a gold finial or band to complement the signs. Clerk was directed to seek clarification and guidance from the CO accordingly and report back to committee with outcome. Also, to liaise with EDDC and DCC regarding replacement of existing signposts across the town centre on their land and the possibility of adding further signs too. Noted.

c) Update on Totally Locally Banner Project. report received. Project proceeding at a pace. SH will keep ATC abreast of any developments and alterations to the schedule for installation.

OC22/088

To consider matters pertaining to the Jubilee Field open space amenity:

i) Members received an update on the transfer of land from EDDC to the Town Council. All legal documents were now signed and completion/exchange/handover scheduled for 29/4/22. Field would therefore fall under ATC jurisdiction and responsibility on 30th April and thus play area inspection checks would be required from that date and our All-Risks insurance policy amended accordingly, especially with regard to the cover for the play equipment value. Noted.

ii) See above re: play area inspection timings and protocol. Clerk will prepare an inspection schedule for the weekly checks. Clerk was also directed to chase the providers of the Play Area Inspection Software package for a quote. Noted.

iii) Mindful of the resolution of the FULL Council on 11th April 2022 to set aside £20,000 towards amenity improvements at Jubilee Field (See FC22/079), the following amenity upgrades were proposed under the delegated authority afford to the Operations Committee:

- * The S106 funded climbing wall to be installed east of the existing play area.
- * Green mesh fencing 1.2m in height to be installed to create a 74m perimeter “dog-free” zone (15m x 22m) to the south of the existing fenced play area with an access gate for pedestrians and a separate double gate for contractors and plant/machinery.
- * Three noticeboards (one at each entrance point to the field). Displayed content to be agreed upon.
- * An additional archway to be ordered and installed at the Dukes Way entrance as a visual amenity.
- * One of the WBF cycle racks to be installed on the hard standing area to the east of the play area.
- * Five Trafalgar benches to be placed around the path-line and elsewhere on the site as guest amenity (this will require an additional two units to be ordered to ensure consistency of appearance).
- * The two WBF picnic benches to be placed on site; one in the dog-free area, one in the existing play area.
- * The three Totally Locally donated benches to be located elsewhere on the field.
- * Messrs. Brooker (Stonemasons) to donate a rock and plinth to commemorate the opening of the field.

Proposed by SH, seconded by AS. Resolved unanimously. Clerk directed to execute actions.

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OC 22/089

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Cemetery:

i) Members considered the timetable for the review of the Cemetery regulations and fees for the forthcoming year and asked Clerk to liaise with the Administration assistant (and local Funeral Directors) to create a re-ordered version of the current regulations over the coming months and bring this back to OPSCOMM when complete for further review and discussion. Noted.

OC22/090

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Allotments:

i) It was suggested that Clerk and Administration Assistant undertake a similar piece of work on the extant Allotment Regulations and bring back to OPSCOMM as before. Furthermore, **it was proposed from the Chair (mindful of the current financial pressures on local households and the undeniable mental health and wellbeing benefits of allotment use) that no price increase be levied for the allotment period 2023/24. Resolved unanimously.**

As this decision is beyond the powers of the Committee's Terms of Reference, and given its impact on the Council's overall finances, this recommendation must be put before FULL Council for approval at the next opportunity. Noted.

ii) It was agreed that Council still wished to proceed with the extension of the North Street allotment (towards the gravel trap) and, in that respect, Clerk was directed to restart negotiations with the HA landowner and EDDC accordingly. Noted

iii) With regards to the provision of improved water supply and additional taps to both North Street and Millwey Rise allotment sites, the Clerk was directed to make suitable enquiries and obtain quotes and bring these back to OPSCOMM as quickly as possible for further consideration. Noted.

iv) On the subject of bonfires on Council owned and operated allotment sites, the Chair suggested that this matter be deferred to the newly created Sustainability Working Party (see FC22/077iii) for them to consider the advantages, disadvantages and environmental impact of bonfires whereupon a report could be brought back to OPSCOMM to tie in with the review and revision of the Allotment Regulations. Agreed. Clerk: Please arrange accordingly.

OC22/091

To consider matters pertaining to Health and Safety / H&S Sub-Committee:

i) Members considered the Health and Safety Audit Report and received an update from LTC (including a review of assessment reports received to date). Noted.

ii) **It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that the Sub-Committee be redesignated a Working Party (group) and that the Guildhall Manager be appointed as a standing member of that WP. Furthermore, that the Terms of Reference for the Sub-Committee be adopted unchanged (other than organisation wording) by the WP. Resolved unanimously.**

Clerk: Please advise Guildhall Manager accordingly and amend wording of ToR and re-publish on website. Noted.

Continued overleaf.

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OC22/092

To consider proposals for new/improved/replacement amenities in the parish:

i) To consider further options for re-purposing of the concrete plinth formerly used as base for bus stop.

Further to confirmation from the DCC Highways Officer that they had no objection to the repurposing of the redundant (former bus stop) plinth on the Chard Road, **it was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that the Council proceed to purchase a hi-security metal shed to store salt, sandbags, bad weather equipment, signs and tools and that the purchase include the assembly and installation of the unit by the manufacturer for speed and convenience.**

Resolved unanimously. Clerk: please note and action accordingly.

The matter of the possible re-purposing of the woodland space behind the shed location (ostensibly for parking and access) was deferred until Autumn 2022. Noted.

ii) To consider report from Clerk on the recent decision by EDDC to phase out use of glyphosate weedkiller and to explore alternative weeding methods for use on town landholdings and on areas maintained by the Town Council:

EDDC's decision was noted. Clerk was asked to research how to dispose of Council's stocks of the chemicals safely and securely. **It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that Axminster Town Council cease the use of glyphosate-based weedkillers with immediate effect and consider alternatives. Resolved unanimously.** Clerk: please note, alert grounds staff accordingly and publicise decision via social media channels.

iii) To consider suggestion that the payphone kiosk in Trinity square be decommissioned and that the kiosk be adopted to host a public access defibrillator for the Trinity Square visitors and users:

After discussion on the merits of maintaining a public payphone service in the town centre for as long as possible, **it was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that the Council should NOT seek to decommission the payphone (and kiosk) and should support its retention for as long as possible, mindful of British Telecom's wishes and intentions in this regard. However, it was also proposed that Morton's the Chemist should be approached to host a cabinet and defibrillator on the wall where once the ATM resided * Resolved unanimously.**

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

** EDDC Conservation officer had confirmed that installation here would be acceptable given the footfall, prominence and public amenity provided by such equipment in the greater interest of the town centre.*

iv) To consider suggestion for provision of bird nesting boxes across Council's green space and recreation area:

It was proposed from the Chair that the Community Shed Project should be approached and asked if they could create 10 such boxes, with Council providing the build materials, as a general parish environmental amenity. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please contact CSP accordingly to seek their agreement and to arrange materials required.

Continued overleaf.

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OC22/092

To consider proposals for new/improved/replacement amenities in the parish (continued):

v) To consider progress on the “green wedge” re-purposing/regeneration project at the Railway Station concourse and to agree forward steps/potential expenditure:

Clerk confirmed that all adjacent parties had been contacted and that none had provided any evidence (or willingness) to be liable (or recognised as the lawful landowner) for the green wedge “waste-ground” between the station and the Trafalgar Way roundabout (by Pets At Home).

It was therefore felt appropriate in the interests of the town’s amenity, appearance and wellbeing, that the Town Council should seek to lead the project to tidy and improve the amenity of this land parcel in conjunction with community volunteers, local businesses and contractors.

Chair offered to speak to Lowara (Millwey Ind. Est.) to enquire as to the availability of their community volunteering team. Clerk to talk to his tree warden contact to arrange a site visit for an assessment of the tree stock and habitat provision and to start the pricing up of the works to clear the site, whilst providing habitat and natural landscape amenity.

It was felt that the site could potentially be improved with benches, noticeboard, signage and possibly (see below) an E-Bike parking facility.

Proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that Council should proceed to undertake these works and to gather together quotes for said works; Clerk to bring these back to Committee for assessment. Resolved unanimously.

vi) To consider suggestion that Axminster Town Council apply for funding to provide an E-Bike charging/access point (perhaps within the concourse area above) to provide continuity along the East Devon Rail Line (Honiton and Cranbrook having already been put forward as suitable sites); to consider whether such an amenity would benefit from a 2nd charging/base point in the town centre to encourage green transport links between the two points.

In light of the previous resolution, Clerk was asked to make enquiries as to when (and if) Axminster could be included in this pilot project. It was felt that a town-centre parking/charging point would be essential (and perhaps one at Millwey Rise Industrial Estate) to encourage commuting between the station, the town centre and the employment hub for visitors etc.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

vii) To consider suggestions for the repurposing of the “Websters” seating area opposite The George for the purposes of improved public amenity; Clerk to provide update after discussions with site owners.

After receiving confirmation from the site owner that they were happy for the Town Council to use this redundant area to improve the town centre amenity, **it was proposed by AS, seconded by SH, that Council proceed to improve and enhance the amenity here with additional flower planters (manufactured from MMT), cycle rack provision, signage and the possible re-location of the perch-benches therein. Expenditure of up to £1000 was duly proposed for this project; delegated authority afforded to Clerk and Chair of the OPSCOMM. to execute in conjunction with the site owner. Resolved unanimously.**

It was also suggested by the Chair that the Clerk investigate the re-purposing of the former “pram store” adjacent to the surgery for the provision of cycle storage for visitors. The clearance of the area would be required, together with the installation of a cycle rack and signage confirming that the Town Council was taking on the maintenance of the area but was not responsible for the bicycles left thereat. Agreed. Clerk: Please note and commence discussion with surgery accordingly.

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OC22/092

To consider proposals for new/improved/replacement amenities in the parish (continued):

viii) To consider suggestion that the Town Council provide water bottle filling stations at Town Building locations across the town for the purposes of improved resident/visitor amenity and to work towards the reduction in single-use plastic bottles as part of Council's climate change objectives:

It was proposed "in principle" by AS, seconded by JW, that Council supported this concept/project and that Clerk should be directed to obtain quotes and workplans for such installations, primarily at the Old Courthouse, the Guildhall and the Town Cemetery. Resolved unan.

Town Clerk: Please note and action accordingly. Bring this matter back to Committee when more information known. Noted.

OC22/093

Chair's Announcements / Matters of Urgency to be noted:

Chair was asked to approve an emergency works order for £642 for the LOLER testing of the lighting bars and back-stage lighting tracks and bars (as requested by the GMC). Approved under Chair's delegated authority. Clerk to provide report on outcomes to next committee meeting.

Noted.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 22.00hrs.

Signed Date 3rd May 2022