

Axminster Town Council

Office Hours
Monday to Thursday
9am – 4pm

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

Minutes of the meeting of the Operations Committee held on Tuesday, 15th November 2022 at 7.30 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall

Draft minutes – yet to be approved: Part ONE version (Redacted)

Meeting began at 7.30pm.

No members of the public in attendance.

In the absence of the Chair, Cllr. Walden, Cllr. Brooker assumed the role of Acting Chair for this meeting. Cllr. Brooker, welcomed all in attendance and outlined fire precautions, exits etc.

Public Forum:

There were no representations from members of the public.

No Committee members expressed an intention to speak in public forum.

Acting Chair closed public forum session at 7.35pm.

OC22/187

To note members of the committee present.

Cllrs. Brooker (ABr.) (Acting-Chair), Burrough (KB), Farrow (JF), Holt (SH) and Spurway (MS).

Meeting was quorate.

Also present, Clerk to the Council, Paul Hayward.

OC22/188

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

(LGA 1972 S.85 (1))

Apology received from;

Cllr. Walden (conflicting engagement).

Cllr. Paice (family commitment)

Cllr. Sedgewick (health matters).

Approval of absences proposed by Acting Chair, seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously.

OC22/189

To note members of the committee not otherwise in attendance.

None.

OC22/190

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.

This does not preclude the need for members to declare any additional interests that may arise during the meeting.

Cllrs. Burrough, Farrow and Spurway each declared an "Affects - Other Registrable Interest" in respect of their roles as Trustees of the Guildhall Management Committee.

OC22/191a)

To consider and, if thought fit, approve the minutes of the Operations Committee meeting held 27th September 2022 and to consider any matters arising (not included within this agenda as business to be attended to.)

JF proposed approval of these minutes. Seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously.

Acting Chair signed the approved minutes accordingly.

Continued overleaf.

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OC22/191b)

To consider any matters arising (not included within this agenda as business to be attended to) from the meeting of the 27th September 2022 and to receive progress report from Clerk:

Clerk confirmed that all matters from that meeting of the 27th September 2022 were either complete, in progress or subject to further discussion below on this meeting agenda. Noted.

OC22/192

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.

No other items of business were proposed by the Chair for inclusion/consideration in Part Two session other than those already listed on the agenda as such.

Operations Committee business to be considered:

OC22/193

To consider a first draft of the requested OPSCOMM work plan/action plan.

SH thanked officers for their work on the first draft of this new action plan and asked that it be maintained and edited/revised as and when required, and that it always be presented to OPSCOMM as a working document when that committee met. JF suggested that the Action Plan become a mirror review document along with the Strategic Forward Plan that S&FCOMM consider when they meet. Noted. Clerk: please action accordingly in conjunction with the Council Administrator.

OC22/194

To consider matters pertaining to the Old Courthouse Complex:

i) To ratify winter closure times.

Reduced opening hours ratified. Proposed Acting Chair, seconded JF. Resolved unanimously.

ii) To reconsider matters pertaining to CCTV provision.

JF proposed that this matter be deferred until the New Year for OPSCOMM to consider further once more detail known from EDDC Conservation officers re: installation. Agreed.

iii) To consider matters pertaining to building integrity and water ingress on 1st floor.

The water ingress issue was noted (and the impact on other tenants). Clerk was asked to investigate whether any external funding was available to cover costs of repairs and to assess requirements under Listed Building regulations. Clerk was directed to bring a report back to OPSCOMM in the New Year. Noted.

iv) Matters pertaining to tenancies.

This item of business would be discussed in Part Two session due to the commercially sensitive nature of the matters to be considered.

Continued overleaf.

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OC22/195

To consider matters pertaining Town Centre development and regeneration:

i) Gateway Signage – options and scoping proposals

Acting Chair thanked the Council Administrator for their design-work on the gateway signage.

It was proposed by SH, seconded by MS, that the Minster/Heart/Rivers design be adopted (with the wording "Welcome to Axminster") and that additional installation of planters below be delayed until Spring 2023. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk was directed to liaise with SJ to obtain quotes for the 4 x gateway signs required based on current dimensions and fixtures, and to liaise with DCC to obtain the necessary licence agreements for signage adjacent to the highway. Noted.

ii) Town Centre signage project (update and WP progress report).

Noting that the fingerpost project was proceeding, SH proposed that suitable locations for the new Town Map be investigated (delegated to SH and the Clerk) to ensure that the landowners in all locations were happy with the installation sites proposed. Seconded by Acting Chair. Resolved unanimously. Clerk to also investigate appropriate fixing methods for the sites identified.

OC22/196

To consider matters pertaining to the Jubilee Field Open Space amenity:

MS declared an "affects NRI" on this agenda item as his property shared a boundary with the field. Noted.

i) To consider arrangements for tree planting within Jubilee Field site (in conjunction with reports from the Hon. Tree Warden) and to consider delegating such planting arrangements to officers and nominated members of this committee to ensure that planting is executed within the established tree planting season.

It was proposed by JF, seconded by KB, that up to £10,000 be allocated from the earmarked Jubilee Field Reserve Fund towards the costs of purchasing, planting and associated works to enable the planting of a "Lime" tree avenue at Jubilee Field in the early New Year and also shrub, hedge and grass planting around the site. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please liaise with SH and the Hon. Tree Warden to make the relevant arrangements and to decide upon stock and species ordering. Once that is determined, please arrange labour for the actual planting of the trees, hedges and shrubs.

OC22/197

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Cemetery:

i) To consider matters pertaining to the future use of the Lower Cemetery Field (currently fallow).

It was proposed by SH that this matter be referred to the newly created Climate Action Group for their initial consideration, review and recommendations. Seconded MS. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

ii) To consider proposal to create a series of composting bins/bays within the newly created amenity area to enable the onsite composting of foliage, plants, flowers, grass and leaves; such compost to then be used within the cemetery grounds. Estimated costs, circa £300.

Proposed by SH, seconded by Acting Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

Continued overleaf.

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OC22/198

To consider matters pertaining to the Guildhall building and curtilage.

i) To consider the proposal that the Town Council acquires a scaffold tower for use within the Guildhall and elsewhere around the town as a matter of operational safety. Estimated costs circa £1300.

Proposed by SH, seconded by KB. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly and arrange (PASMA) training for site users as appropriate.

ii) To consider proposal to replace the entrance (double) doors to the (GH) parish shed to improve security and amenity.

Principle of replacement proposed by JF, seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please collate quotations for various options (steel/uPvc/wood) and bring back to OPSCOMM as soon as practicable.

iii) To consider proposal to acquire a modern portrait of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to be displayed in the Jubilee Room, Guildhall.

It was proposed by JF, seconded by SH, that such a portrait should not be purchased and that, similarly, neither should a portrait of His Majesty the King, Charles III. Resolved unanimously.

No further action required.

OC22/199

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

i) To consider whether this Council wishes to accept the offer of a free (donated) defibrillator and cabinet together with contribution towards electrical fixing costs.

Acceptance (with thanks) proposed by SH, seconded by JF. Resolved unanimously.

Preference for installation location was the Fire Station in Lyme Close.

Clerk: Please liaise with benefactor thanking them for their offer and accepting. Please continue to liaise with Devon and Somerset Fire service to arrange consent for the station installation.

ii) To provide direction to Clerk in respect of ongoing liaison with AED Donate (a defibrillator charity) who undertook fundraising in Axminster aimed at providing additional AED provision in the town.

It was proposed by JF, seconded by Acting Chair, that this Town Council should request (as promised) the provision of a defibrillator and cabinet from AED Donate to be installed at a suitable location in the town. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly. Preferred location (based on the benefactor's criteria for donations) was on outer wall of Mole Avon Stores on the Railway Concourse / Car park boundary.

iii) To consider proposal to replace the Town Council's amenity water bowser.

Proposed by JF, seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly. Liaise with parish planting volunteers upon arrival to commission and arrange storage.

Continued overleaf.

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OC22/199

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

iv) To consider matters pertaining to sponsorship of the roundabout planters.

A 3rd party had requested that they be allowed to “tender” for the continuing sponsorship of the roundabout planters at the end of the FY23-24 season. It was recognised that the principle (and application) of the sponsorship arrangement had caused some parties concern and dismay and that there was uncertainty as to whether Council had the actual legal power to accept sponsorship for this purpose ie the advertisement of a commercial business.

As such, it was proposed by JF, seconded by MS, that no further sponsorship be permitted after the end of the season (the existing agreement period) referred to above and that a letter of thanks be sent to the existing sponsor outlining our thanks for past sponsorship but confirming the new arrangements that bring the arrangement to an end. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please action accordingly and also write to the 3rd party thanking them for their enquiry but confirming the same decision re: future sponsorship.

v) To ratify earlier decision to “rest” the Minster flowerbeds for a growing season and to provide funds for fertiliser/compost to refresh those beds during that interim period.

Proposed by JF, seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously.

No further action required as planting volunteers were already aware of the informal decision already taken under Chair’s delegated authority.

vi) To consider matters pertaining to the display flowerbed adjacent to the entrance to West Street car park.

It was proposed by SH, seconded by Acting Chair, that Clerk should be afforded delegated authority to enter into negotiations with the site owner (EDDC) to determine whether they wished to maintain the flowerbed in the future or whether ATC could assume responsibility (and ownership) to ensure a consistent and presentable display at this key gateway site. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly. Please advise OPSCOMM of EDDC’s decision at the earliest opportunity.

vii) To consider request from Axminster Skatepark project to replace the two existing waste bins onsite with two (previously purchased) dual-waste bin units (general and recycling waste). For clarity, the request is to supply the bins only; the Skatepark Trustees will manage the waste emptying and disposal.

Approval proposed by JF, seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly with Skatepark Trustee team.

viii) To consider parishioner request to alter the positioning of the VAS (vehicles activated speed) unit on the Crewkerne Road, Raymonds Hill.

It was proposed that Council purchase a 2nd VAS mounting bracket for the existing pole on Crewkerne Road (central) to enable dual-directional VAS operation. Cost circa £50 plus delivery. Proposed by JF, seconded by KB. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action purchase and installation accordingly.

Continued overleaf.

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OC22/199

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

ix) To consider update from Clerk on the potential Green Wedge project and to agree a notional timeline and budget allocation for said project if Council wishes to proceed. Mindful of the ongoing (concurrent) E-bikes project at the same location, it was felt that this project required more in-depth investigation and research, together with an assessment of what 3rd party / external fundraising might be available to support the proposed expenditure. **SH proposed that this matter be re-considered by OPSCOMM in the New Year once definite details on the Urban Renewal funding / E-Bikes grant funding were available. It also allowed for further discussions / decisions on FY23-24 budget to be finalised which would be critical to the overall project. Agreed.** Clerk: Please note and add to OPSCOMM agenda at a suitable point as directed.

x) To consider proposal to establish an additional three sandbag/grit-salt/emergency centre “sheds” across the town (one exists currently at Millwey) to assist towards Council’s Emergency Plan/Response contingency strategy. (any decision would be dependent on the Town Council reaching agreement with landowners to site units at each proposed location; Woodbury (S/E), North Street (Centre) and West Street/Guildhall (S) [or potentially at Jubilee Field]. Estimated costs circa £6000 for the three units incl. groundwork and installation.

It was proposed by JF, seconded by SH, that Council should NOT proceed with this expenditure at the present time but that members should be given the opportunity to consider such spend in the FY23-24 budget. It was noted that Council had purchased one storage unit in this financial year already and members believed that this should be a rolling project to improve and bolster flood resilience / emergency planning in the future. Resolved unanimously.

No further action necessary. Clerk to ensure that existing emergency stores had sufficient stocks of sandbags to provide public amenity in case of need.

OC22/200

To consider matters pertaining to Risk Management Assessments (standing Committee agenda item):

Verbal report provided by Clerk on ongoing progress in this respect. No further action required. Acting Chair moved to the next agenda item.

OC22/201

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

SH outlined the recent bid application to SW Railways for up to £50,000 of grant funding towards provision of an E-bike station (dock) at the Axminster Railway “Green Wedge” location. Ratification of the application submission (due to deadlines) was sought. Council had provisionally allocated £10,000 of match-funding but this would only be spent if our grant bid was approved. Noted and ratified.

OC22/202

Date of next scheduled meeting for the committee; Not yet scheduled. To be advised in consultation with Chair of the Committee and the Proper Officer dependant on business to be considered and any pressing deadlines that were advised to Council.

Continued overleaf.

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OC22/203

JF proposed that, under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, (as amended by the Local Government Act 1972, the public, (including the press) be excluded from the meeting as publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted. Seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously.

Matters to be considered in committee session (Part Two):

To be agreed upon by members of the committee as and when appropriate (see OC22/192)
The following business was considered within Part Two session in light of the commercially sensitive and confidential nature of the subject matter.

OC22/194 (IC) – see earlier agenda item.

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

iv) To consider matters pertaining to confidential tenancy matters at the OCH building. A request had been received from the tenant of the Minster Room (former Senior Citizens centre) for a 12m extension to their current Licence agreement on the same rental terms plus service charges. It was proposed by SH, seconded by JF, that this request be approved. Resolved unanimously.

Furthermore, additional requests for repairs and improvements had been received from the existing tenant of the Arts Café. It was proposed by SH, seconded by JF, that no further requests would be actioned once the pre-agreed repairs had been effected (in the most judicious manner possible). This would ensure that the Council could resume billing of the rental charges as soon as possible. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please note and liaise with tenants accordingly.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 21.00hrs.

Signed Date.....

Minutes of the meeting of the Operations Committee held on Tuesday,
15th November 2022 at 7.30 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall

Draft minutes – yet to be approved: Part ONE version (Redacted)

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Appendix ONE: Recommendations requiring FULL Council approval.

OC22/196i)

Recommendation that the expenditure of up to £10,000 be approved for tree, hedgerow and shrub/grass planting at Jubilee Field (to cover purchase, materials and labour costs).

DRAFT