

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, 27th September 2022 at 7.30 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall

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

Meeting began at 7.30pm.

Chair, Cllr. Walden, welcomed all in attendance and outlined fire precautions, exits etc.

Public Forum:

Representation received from member of the public regarding planting and allotment matters. Noted. Chair asked the member of the public to remain as their contribution throughout the meeting would be helpful to committee members. One matter relating to planting schedules on the Minster Green was deferred to agenda item OC22/184 (Matters of Urgency). See below.

Chair closed public forum session at 7.45pm.

OC22/167

To note members of the committee present.

Cllrs. Walden (JW) (Chair), Brooker (A) (ABr.) (Vice-Chair), Farrow (JF), Holt (SH), Paice (EP), Sedgewick (AS) and Spurway. Meeting was quorate.

Also present, Clerk to the Council, Paul Hayward and one member of the public.

OC22/168

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

(LGA 1972 S.85 (1))

Apology received from Cllr. Burrough (family commitment). **Approval proposed by Chair, seconded by ABr. Resolved unanimously.**

OC22/169

To note members of the committee not otherwise in attendance.

None.

OC22/170

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.

JF and AS declared an "Affects - Other Registrable Interest" in respect of their roles as Trustees of the Guildhall Management Committee.

OC22/171a)

To consider and, if thought fit, approve the minutes of the Operations Committee meeting held 5th July 2022 and to consider any matters arising (not included within this agenda as business to be attended to.)

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

Chair signed the approved minutes accordingly.

Continued overleaf.

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OC22/171b)

To consider any matters arising (not included within this agenda as business to be attended to) from the meeting of the 5th July 2022 and to receive progress report from Clerk:

Clerk confirmed that all matters from that meeting of the 5th July 2022 were either complete, in progress or subject to further discussion below on this meeting agenda. Noted.

OC22/172

To note the adjournment of the previous meeting on 13th September 2022 as inquorate (meeting was postponed by the Chair as a mark of respect upon the passing of Her late Majesty The Queen on 8th September 2022) and to consider (and approve) the draft minutes for that adjourned meeting.

Noted. Approval of (adjourned) meet minutes proposed by Chair, seconded by JF. Resolved unanimously.

OC22/173

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.

Chair suggested that agenda items OC22/179xi) and xii) and OC22/182vi) be considered within Part Two session in light of the commercially sensitive and confidential business that Chair felt would be discussed. Proposed by Chair, seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously.

OC22/174

To note the resignation of Cllr. Martin Mynard from this committee.

Noted. Chair conveyed his thanks to Cllr. Mynard for his contributions to this committee in the past and wished him a speedy recovery moving forwards.

Operations Committee business to be considered:

AS requested that the Clerk be directed to create a draft "Operations Action Plan/Schedule" covering all the key, specific areas for which OPSCOMM had jurisdiction and responsibility so that projects/actions/resolutions/decisions could be tracked and monitored in terms of delivery, budget, schedule and priority. It was suggested by Chair that a draft document be brought back to OPSCOMM in November for review and consideration. Clerk to action. Noted.

OC22/175

To consider matters pertaining to the Old Courthouse Complex:

- i) To ratify closure times revision as a result of recent anti-social behaviour evidenced. Reduced opening hours ratified. Proposed Chair, seconded EP. Resolved unanimously.

Continued overleaf.

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OC22/175

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

ii) To consider proposals to undertake autumn planting (up to an expenditure limit to be agreed upon) in the Public Garden to create a spring/summer display.
Chair proposed suspension of Standing Orders to permit public representation. Resolved unanimously.

Chair invited the member of the public present to offer his suggestions in this regard.

Subsequently, SH proposed that up to £250 be set aside for the costs of planting materials, with powers to spend to be delegated to Chair and Clerk. Resolved unanimously.

Chair proposed resumption of Standing Orders. Resolved unanimously.

iii) To consider revisions to the OCH cleaning schedule and frequency in light of recent tenancy changes.

Chair proposed, after discussion, that cleaning schedule be reduced to 3 days per week for the disabled WC facility and 1 day per week for the 1st floor office/area. In the event of any complaints regarding the reduction in frequency, the Clerk was duly delegated to revert back to the original schedule and to advise OPSCOMM members accordingly. Seconded by JF. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please contact the retained cleaning contractor and convey this decision to them.

OC22/176

Update on Section 106 projects ongoing:

i) Millwey Rise Playground extension project (update)

Clerk provided a further update to members on the progress with this project and his negotiations with EDDC on the proposed transfer of the land at Millwey to facilitate the creation of an additional infant (and accessibility compliant) play area adjacent to the existing play facility. Chair expressed frustration that subsequent delays at EDDC had somewhat stymied the project delivery and SH suggested that the Town Council write formally to the District Councillors involved seeking explanations for the delay and also asking for clarification on the deadline for the spend of the ring-fenced S106 money. MS also queried whether the funds could be spent (alternatively) at the Bonner Glen play park site. It was subsequently seconded by Chair that Clerk proceed in that regard and come back to members with answers at the earliest opportunity.

ii) Potential arrangements for Douglas Hull memorial garden project.

A former Mayor of Axminster had asked the Council for a progress report in this respect.

After debate, the Chair proposed that the Old Courthouse Garden be renamed "The Douglas Hull Memorial Garden" in his memory subject to approval by the FULL Town Council. Seconded by AS. Resolved unanimously.

MS suggested that the Clerk liaise with the executor of former Cllr. Hull's estate as a courtesy.

Noted and agreed. Clerk: Please seek FULL Council's approval of this recommendation and, once approved, agree date for re-naming exercise to be completed, with a schedule of appropriate comms and PR.

Continued overleaf.

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OC22/176

Update on Section 106 projects ongoing (continued):

iii) Jubilee Field climbing wall installation project (update)

Clerk provided a final update to confirm that the climbing wall had been installed, signed off by the play inspector as fit for use and was now included in the regular play inspection / maintenance schedule. Noted. Clerk/Council Admin: Please liaise with Mayor to arrange suitable PR event to promote use of the amenity.

iv) Axminster Skatepark OS / CCTV / Lighting project (update)

Chair noted that this matter had been discussed at length at the FULL Town Council meeting held 26/9/2022 (the day before this meeting) and felt that no further debate was justified given the resolutions of that earlier meeting. Noted.

OC22/177

To consider matters pertaining Town Centre development and regeneration:

i) Gateway Signage – options and scoping proposals

Members expressed regret that the Gateway Signage project had not progressed further but recognised that other matters had taken priority given the resources of the Town Council. Members agreed that the proposed sign should show a representation of the Minster Church, the word AXMINSTER and should contain no tagline/strapline. The sign shape to be rectangular with a "hump" on the upper level. It was further agreed that the main Gateway Signage should make no reference to the town's French Twin Town, but that the mounting posts should be constructed to enable the subsequent addition of a separate sign in the future if so required/requested.

Proposed by SH, seconded by EP. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please liaise with Council Administrator to create some visuals for members to consider and approve at the next OPSCOMM meeting.

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

SH, Clerk and Council Administrator needed to arrange a time to review the final proposed locations, the definitive finger board wording and direction of fingerposts. Once done, the order could be placed within the delegated authority already approved for the spend in this respect. Noted.

OC22/178

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

i) To consider proposal that urgent tree works be undertaken on sites trees in light of recent report on tree condition but also to improve relations with neighbouring (adjoining) land-owners; estimated cost of such urgent works to be in region of £1300 plus VAT.

Justification: Public safety grounds.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS that authority be afforded to Clerk to arrange these safety works as a matter of urgency subject to a maximum spend of £1300. Resolved unanimously. Clerk: please note and action accordingly.

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OC22/178

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

ii) To consider proposal that the Town Council should apply to Devon County Council for a “native tree” pack comprising 45 assorted trees for planting over winter in the Jubilee Field in consultation with the Hon. Tree Warden.

Proposed by JF, seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk was directed to pursue this resolution with vigour and to liaise with SH and the Hon. Tree Warden to discuss the planting of these trees (if successful) and sourcing & planting of other trees subject to the budgetary spend already approved by FULL Council for such works.

OC22/179

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Cemetery:

i) To consider first draft of revised Cemetery Regulations / Burial Terms and Conditions.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that the draft revised Cemetery regulations under consideration incorporate a requirement that all memorial stonemasons working in the cemetery must be NAMM or BRAMM accredited and certified. Evidence must be provided to the Burial Authority in this regard. Resolved unanimously.

Consequently, it was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that the substantively revised Cemetery Regulations be adopted as policy. Resolved nem con.

Clerk: Please note and publish this policy (once ratified by FULL Council on 10/10/2022). Please also forward a copy to all funeral directors and masons known to the Town Council locally. *Chair asked the Clerk to convey the thanks of the committee to the administrative staff for the work that went into revising these regulations.*

ii) To consider proposals to amend Cemetery/Burial Fees & Charges as per draft schedule circulated.

An issue was raised regarding additional wording to clarify memorial dimensions. It was agreed that ABr. would liaise with the Clerk (in his role as Burial officer) to add these slight revisions into the fees document; delegated authority to be afforded to the Clerk to integrate into the finished approved fees document. Noted.

JF proposed that the revised, substantive, Fees and Charges document be approved as policy. Seconded by Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and publish this policy (once ratified by FULL Council on 10/10/2022). Please also forward a copy to all funeral directors and masons known to the Town Council locally. *Chair asked the Clerk to convey the thanks of the committee to the administrative staff for the work that went into revising these charges.*

iii) To consider request to amend the Exclusive Right of Burial Ownership period from 50 years to 99 years.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that the extended period be approved with immediate effect. Resolved unanimously. Clerk: please note.

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OC22/179

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Cemetery (continued):

iv) To consider proposal to purchase a sufficient number of ERB “pre-purchase” markers to highlight where plots have been pre-purchased but where no interment has yet taken place.

It was proposed by JF, seconded by Chair, that Clerk be afforded delegated authority to proceed with this proposal at an anticipated cost of no more than £500 net. Resolved unanimously.

v) To consider proposal to create a series of site markers to provide clear and precise identification of plot rows and column orientation.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by JF, that Clerk be afforded delegated authority to proceed with this proposal at an anticipated cost of no more than £100 net. Resolved unanimously.

vi) To consider proposal to undertake trimming and pruning works to all site yews; to remove the brush pile on-site as a precursor to setting out the top field for future interments and to remove the section of Beech hedge adjacent to Z section and the lower field to create a wider turning-circle and provide better access to heavy vehicles providing site amenity eg. skips etc.

It was proposed by JF, seconded by Chair, that Clerk be afforded delegated authority to proceed with this proposal at an anticipated cost of no more than £1800 net. Resolved unanimously.

vii) To consider proposal to authorise Council expenditure on a NAMM accredited Safety Inspection and Assessment training course (and qualification) for Council staff to ensure H&S compliance at the Cemetery.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by EP, that Clerk be afforded delegated authority to proceed with this proposal at an anticipated cost of no more than £2800 net to ensure that all staff dealing with memorial headstones at the cemetery site were suitably trained. Resolved unanimously.

Justification: Health and Safety / Risk Assessment management / public safety.

viii) To note that a Chapel / Asset survey will be undertaken in the next 90 days to assess contents, ensure equipment compliance and condition and consider future revisions to site storage needs.

Noted.

ix) To consider proposal to create permanent hard-standing access to cemetery WC from northern chapel.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by JF, that Clerk be afforded delegated authority to proceed with this proposal at an anticipated cost of no more than £200 net. Resolved unanimously.

x) To consider public suggestion that CCTV amenity should be provided within the cemetery site.

Members noted with sincere regret the recent damage to a memorial tablet in the GOR section and noted the social media representations seeking CCTV installation at the cemetery site. However, members felt that CCTV onsite would be prohibitively expensive given the area to be covered, would be intrusive to mourners and those visiting the site and would not necessarily prevent any future repetitions of such anti-social behaviour.

It was therefore proposed by Chair, seconded by EP, that this proposal NOT be taken forward. Resolved unanimously.

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OC22/179

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Cemetery (continued):

xi) To consider matters pertaining to memorial adornments and chattels.
To be considered in Part Two session below.

xii) To consider matters pertaining to plot planting and foliage.
To be considered in Part Two session below.

xiii) To consider proposal for additional “open” bin amenities at Cemetery for disposal of flowers, wrappings etc. **It was proposed by Chair, seconded by JF, that Clerk be afforded delegated authority to proceed with this proposal at an anticipated cost of no more than £200 net. Resolved unanimously.**

OC22/180

To consider matters pertaining to Town Allotments:

Clerk asked Chair to consider the business at v) prior to consideration of items i) to iv).
Agreed by Chair.

Chair proposed suspension of Standing Orders to permit public representation. Resolved unanimously.

Chair invited the member of the public present to offer his suggestions in relation to items of business in this section.

v) To consider matters pertaining to prohibition of bonfires on all allotment sites as a result of public complaint.

It was subsequently proposed by SH, seconded by AS, that the Town Council should NOT apply a blanket ban on bonfires at the allotment sites but should, rather, limit the use of bonfires to between 1st October and 30th April each year (ie. excluding the summer months). Furthermore, that the draft allotment regulations (see i. below) should incorporate an Appendix outlining current EDDC guidance on the use of bonfires and seeking tenant’s co-operation and understanding. Resolved unanimously.

i) To consider first draft of revised Allotment Regulations / Terms and Conditions.

Chair sought some clarification of proposed amendments to the extant allotment regulations from Clerk in respect of the holding of deposits for (new) allotment tenancies and the prohibition of animals (other than chickens). Amendments were made to the draft wording accordingly.

Subsequently, the Chair proposed the adoption of the revised (substantive) allotment regulations subject to the final agreement of the Town Council on 10th October 2022. Seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously.

Chair asked the Clerk to convey the thanks of the committee to the administrative staff for the work that went into revising these regulations.

Continued overleaf.

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OC22/180

To consider matters pertaining to Town Allotments (continued):

- ii) To consider recent allotment re-mapping / re-numbering proposals for improved site amenity and to assist access & identification for emergency personnel / Town Council employees.
- iii) To consider proposals for plot markers and improved site noticeboard publicity and information amenity.

These two proposals were considered concurrently as they were intrinsically related.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that Clerk be afforded delegated authority to proceed with these proposals at an anticipated combined cost of no more than £600 net. Resolved unanimously.

- iv) To consider matters pertaining to gate access from Higher Woodbury Way.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that Clerk be afforded delegated authority to proceed with this proposal as a matter of urgency. Resolved unanimously.

OC22/181

To consider matters pertaining to Health and Safety Working Party (group):

- i) To receive update from Clerk on recent meeting with H&S retained consultant. Clerk provided a verbal update on this matter and confirmed that he and the Council Administrator had met with the retained H&S consultant in September to assess current situation with regard to this matter and to start bringing together procedures, protocols and policies to ensure compliance. A further meeting to discuss progress and consider draft policies was arranged for early November. Noted. Chair thanked Clerk for his work in this respect.

OC22/182

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

- i) To consider request to provide an additional bench amenity adjacent to Axminster Library for public use.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that Clerk be afforded delegated authority to proceed with this proposal at an anticipated cost of no more than £350 net. Resolved unanimously.

- ii) To consider proposal to replace damaged/missing bench amenities at Loretto Road and Woodbury Park.

It was proposed by SH, seconded by Chair, that Clerk be afforded delegated authority to proceed with this proposal with a third "spare" bench being purchased at the same time to benefit from economies of scale (an anticipated cost of no more than £1300 net). Resolved unanimously.

- iii) To consider whether Town Council wishes to extend "welcome plaque" installation to all remaining benches.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that Clerk be afforded delegated authority to proceed with this proposal at an anticipated cost of no more than £280 net. Resolved unanimously.

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OC22/182

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

iv) To consider public request for Town Council involvement in seagull nuisance at Field End, Axminster.

It was felt by members that the Town Council should not become involved in such matters as it had no powers to act and that similarly, the Town Council should not become embroiled in any correspondence with alleged perpetrators of illicit “seagull encouragement/feeding” as this was beyond our remit. Instead, the correspondent was advised to contact EDDC Environmental Health team if they believed the actions of their neighbour was causing a public health nuisance/hazard. Clerk: please convey this decision to the author of the request. Noted.

v) To consider expenditure on asset / amenity to promote public engagement with the Council; gazebo, flags and display materials.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that Clerk be afforded delegated authority to proceed with the purchase of a HD [Burgundy] gazebo, two feather flags and a tablecloth (with logo) [for public events/community engagement purposes] at an anticipated cost of no more than £500 net. Resolved unanimously.

vi) To consider proposals for replacement/renewal of Council's vehicle stock/amenity. To be considered in Part Two session below.

vii) To consider request from Light Up Axminster for financial contribution towards enhanced festive lighting (and associated hardware improvements) in the town for the benefit of residents and visitors.

After review of a funding request from Light Up Axminster, and a lengthy debate on the subject of Christmas lighting and the role of the Town Council in promoting community engagement, economic vibrancy and tourism, it was proposed by EP, seconded by JF, that the Town Council should use part of its Christmas Lighting ring-fenced reserves to provide funds to Light Up Axminster in the amount of £3841, subject to the final approval of the FULL Council on 10th October 2022. Resolved unanimously.

Local Government Act 1972 s144.

OC22/183

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. Chair moved to the next agenda item.

OC22/184

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

As outlined in the public forum section at the start of the meeting, it was suggested that the planting bays on the Minster Green be “rested” for 12 months to allow the soil to recover and be improved by the planting/gardening volunteers. Chair supported this action and asked Clerk to liaise with the gardening group to ascertain what spend might be necessary for fertiliser, compost etc. Noted.

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OC22/185

Date of next scheduled meeting for the committee; 1st November 2022

OC22/186

Vice-Chair of Committee, ABr. 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 Chair. 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 OC22/173)
The following business was considered within Part Two session in light of the commercially sensitive and confidential nature of the subject matter.

OC22/179xi)

xi) To consider matters pertaining to memorial adornments and chattels. (Cemetery business)
It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that Clerk be afforded delegated authority to proceed with this proposal in line with newly adopted Cemetery Regulations. Resolved unanimously.

OC22/179xii)

xii) To consider matters pertaining to plot planting and foliage. (Cemetery business)
It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that Clerk be afforded delegated authority to proceed with this proposal in line with newly adopted Cemetery Regulations. Resolved unanimously.

OC22/182vi)

vi) To consider proposals for replacement/renewal of Council's vehicle stock/amenity. (Amenities in the parish)
It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that Clerk be directed to bring a written report back to the OPSCOMM in November outlining the possible approach to this issue and a fully costed proposal covering acquisition / replacement / disposal of Council's vehicle assets and amenities. Resolved unanimously.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 21.40hrs.

Signed Date.....

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27th September 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.

OC22/176ii)

Recommendation that the Old Courthouse Garden be re-named “The Douglas Hull Memorial Garden” in memory of former Town, District and County Councillor Douglas Hull.

OC22/179i)

Recommendation that revised Cemetery Regulations (September 2022) be adopted as policy.

OC22/179ii)

Recommendation that revised Cemetery Fees & Charges (September 2022) be adopted as policy.

OC22/179vii)

Recommendation that members of staff dealing with memorial matters at the Town Cemetery undertake NAMM approved Safety Inspection and Assessment training at a cost of £2800 (total).

OC22/180i)

Recommendation that revised Allotment Regulations (September 2022) be adopted as policy.

OC22/182vii)

Recommendation that the Town Council approve the payment of £3841 towards the improvements to the Town’s Christmas Lighting Display (as organised and procured by Light Up Axminster) – funds to be taken from Council’s earmarked Christmas Lights fund, currently standing at £5100.