

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,
5th June 2023 at 7.00 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall
Minutes approved 4th September 2023: Part ONE version (Redacted)**

Present: Cllrs. Walden (outgoing Chair), Brooker, Farrow and Willey. Meeting was quorate. Also in attendance was the Clerk to the Council, Paul Hayward.
No members of the public in attendance.

Meeting began at 7.00pm.

The Presiding Chair, Cllr. Walden, welcomed all in attendance and outlined fire precautions, exits etc and ran through the agenda procedure and protocol, noting the agenda statements as published.

Public Forum:

With no members of the public present, and with no Committee members expressing an intention to speak in public forum, ***the Chair subsequently closed the public forum session at 7.05pm.***

OC23/022

To elect a Chair for the committee 2023-24:

Cllr. Farrow proposed the nomination of Cllr. Walden as Chair, seconded by Cllr. Brooker. Cllr. Walden accepted the nomination. No other nominations proposed.
Resolved 3 votes for, 1 abstention (JW).

OC23/023

To elect a Vice-Chair for the committee 2023-24:

Cllr. Farrow proposed the nomination of Cllr. Brooker as Vice-Chair, seconded by the Chair. Cllr. Brooker accepted the nomination. No other nominations proposed.
Resolved 3 votes for, 1 abstention (JW).

OC23/024

To note members of the committee present:

As detailed above.

OC23/025

**To note and, if thought fit, to approve apologies (and reasons for absence):
(LGA 1972 S.85 (1))**

Cllr. Burrough sent her apologies due to a conflicting engagement.
Cllr. Paice sent her apologies due to a conflicting engagement.
Chair proposed that these apologies be accepted, and the absence approved.
Seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Continued overleaf.

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

OC23/026

To note members of the committee not otherwise in attendance.

None. All members of the committee were either in attendance or had sent apologies.

OC23/027

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.

Cllr. Willey declared an "Affects NRI" in respect of agenda item OC23/037 i) to vii) with an additional disclosable pecuniary interest declared in respect of OC23/037 v) & vi). Noted.

OC23/028

To consider and, if thought fit, approve the minutes of the Operations Committee meeting held 6th March 2023 and to consider any matters arising (not included within this agenda as business to be attended to.)

i) Chair proposed approval of these minutes. Seconded by Cllr. Farrow.
Resolved unanimously.

Chair signed the approved minutes accordingly.

ii) Clerk outlined those matters outstanding/arising from the previous meeting that had not been included in this meeting agenda. Noted with thanks.

OC23/029

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:

OC23/030

To consider and review current OPSCOMM Work Plan / Action Plan:

Members reviewed this updated document which details all outstanding operational decisions and works pending, and provides updates as to timings, scheduling, delays (with reasons), priorities and details of works/actions completed. Amendments proposed to existing workflow timetables and prioritisation and other minor edits suggested. Clerk will integrate these into the master document and bring back to the committee as a standing item on each agenda for review.

Continued overleaf.

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

OC23/031

To consider draft revised Operations Committee Terms of Reference (as amended by Clerk, Cllr. Farrow and former Cllr. Sedgewick):

Adoption proposed by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously. It was, however, felt by members that the final decision on the adoption of these Terms of Reference should be deferred to FULL Council for their approval.
Clerk: please add to the next available FULL agenda for Council consideration. Noted.

OC23/032

To consider Council's ongoing Risk Management Assessment as it relates to the business and activities of the Operations Committee.

The matter of Risk assessments (pertaining to the work and function of the Operations Committee) was previously discussed, and it was resolved that the subject be considered as a standing agenda item for each meeting of this committee. On this occasion, the Clerk/RFO had nothing to report to committee members and no matters were raised by committee members. With nothing further to discuss on this occasion, the Chair moved that the committee move to the agenda item. Agreed.

OC23/033

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

- i) To receive update on repairs to cobbled area in courtyard (post-decking platform removal) mindful of the buildings listed building status.
- ii) To receive update on other maintenance works within the Old Courthouse building complex and to receive report from Clerk on recent meeting with the EDDC Listed Building officer. The Chair proposed that both of these items be considered in Part Two session as there were associated matters relating to commercial tenancies which were deemed confidential at this time due to financial, legal and insurance implications. Seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously. **See Part Two minutes of this meeting.**
- iii) To consider request for the installation of an external tap (with interior supply meter within) on the exterior wall of the disabled WC for the purposes of garden maintenance and user amenity. Expenditure (sub-£100) proposed for approval from the Chair as a guest/visitor/public amenity. Resolved unanimously.

OC23/034

To consider matters pertaining to Axminster Town Centre incl. development and regeneration:

- i) Update on Town Gateway Signage project; Clerk to report. Chair proposed that £1600 be spent on two sets of new mounting posts (via DCC – the highways authority - due to the proximity to the highway) for the forthcoming Gateway signs at Bow Bridge and on Chard Road (Weycroft). Seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously. Clerk provided an update on the delays to the production of the Gateway Signs which were the result of unavoidable delays associated with the 3rd party licensing authority.

Continued overleaf.

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

OC23/034

To consider matters pertaining to Axminster Town Centre incl. development and regeneration (continued):

ii) Update on Town Map installation project and to consider request for the installation of an additional map frame (and A1 map) on the outer wall of the Axminster Library as a visitor/resident amenity. (Cost £100 net).

Proposed by Cllr. Farrow, seconded by the Chair. Resolved unanimously.

iii) Update on Town Fingerpost installation project; Clerk to report.

Production timetable and installation schedule noted with thanks.

OC23/035

To consider matters pertaining to the Guildhall building and curtilage (including Council offices):

i) To ratify the recent expenditure (approved under Chair's/Clerk's delegated authority) on additional sections for the existing Tower Scaffold system to enable enhanced use of that equipment in other areas within the Guildhall building and curtilage.

Additional costs incurred £475. Ratification of that expenditure proposed by Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

ii) To receive report from Clerk on the recent upgrade of building connectivity to Fibre for improved efficiency and amenity for guests and building tenants alike.

Report noted. Cllr. Farrow highlighted some areas within the building that were suffering from poor wi-fi connectivity at times. Clerk to take this matter forward with the networking contractor.

iii) To receive report from Clerk on ongoing works at the Guildhall and to consider further works deemed urgent/critical in respect of the building licence and governance compliance.

After considering the report from the Clerk, committee members asked that a further report be prepared regarding exterior lighting to the Guildhall building, with costs, licensing requirements, health & safety implications and noting any technical limitations identified.

Continued overleaf.

THIS SECTION IS LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

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

OC23/036

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

i) To receive update report from Clerk on progress with “Green Wedge” / E-bikes (Urban Renewal) project and preliminary works / survey investigations / landownership & acquisition.

Report noted. Clerk was asked to maintain liaison with the funding partners, project stakeholders, consultants and other 3rd parties to ensure forward progression with this project.

ii) To receive update report from Clerk on progress with the Millwey Rise Play Area extension project in conjunction with EDDC Housing Team (the freehold owners of the proposed extension site). Report noted. Clerk asked to continue efforts to deliver the project so that the time limited S106 funding was not lost and to report back to committee as soon as any further developments warranted.

iii) To consider request from Clerk that the Town Council takes up a membership of the Parish Mapping Online system at an annual cost of £270 (plus VAT) as a service amenity for staff, councillors and residents alike.

Proposed by Cllr. Farrow, seconded by the Chair. Resolved unanimously.

iv) To consider the ongoing maintenance and ownership of a bus shelter located on the westbound section of the A35 at Raymonds Hill (west of Hunters Lodge Inn) which is currently owned by Axminster Town Council, but which is situated in Uplyme Parish. (This subject arose after a complaint from a resident of Uplyme regarding the condition of the shelter and confirmation from the Uplyme Parish Council Clerk that the asset belongs to this authority not theirs).

The Chair brought committee members up-to-speed with the history of this asset (item of street furniture) and explained why this matter was before the committee. After discussion, it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr. Willey, that the asset should be offered to the Chair of Uplyme Parish Council as an asset transfer for £1 given that the item was within that parish, and not in Axminster. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please note and action accordingly, contacting the Chair as soon as possible.

OC23/037

To consider matters pertaining to allotments in the parish:

i) To consider proposal from Cllr. Walden that a contractor be commissioned to remove spoil from the centre of the access path into the Woodbury allotment site (lower) to alleviate the risk of vehicle grounding.

Chair asked that Clerk (and admin team) seek to obtain three quotes for such works and return to the committee once available. Noted.

ii) To consider suggestion that remedial works be undertaken to the area (to the right) at the lower Woodbury entrance to create a parking area – this would involve removal of spoil/debris and some trees and installation of hardstanding to improve user amenity on site.

Chair asked that Clerk (and admin team) seek to obtain three quotes for such works and return to the committee once available. Noted.

Continued overleaf.

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

OC23/037

To consider matters pertaining to allotments in the parish(continued):

iii) To consider proposal that the roadside hedges at Woodbury Park be cut back on highway safety grounds during the nesting season.

Chair proposed that delegated authority be afforded to the Clerk to assess any hazards posed by the hedge line to users of the highway and attend to them as necessary using in-house labour or contracted resources. Furthermore, that the lower and higher access splay hedges be cut back to improve safety for those leaving the site. Seconded by Cllr. Willey. Resolved unanimously.

iv) To consider suggestion to install a fixed noticeboard at each entrance to Woodbury Park allotments (2) and at Millwey Rise and at North Street to display a map of the allotment site, allotment regulations and also space for vacancy notices, action notices, tenant alerts etc. Cost approximately £2,544 (plus VAT) and fitting (in-house labour).

Members considered that a noticeboard displaying site maps, allotment regulations, site notices and other associated documents was key to maintaining and improving site health and safety and providing greater amenity to tenants and visitors. Expenditure up to the value shown above was proposed by Chair, seconded by Cllr. Willey (although Clerk hoped that the items could be procured at a cheaper price). Resolved unanimously.

Cllr. Willey left the meeting at this point due to his disclosable pecuniary interest (being an allotment tenant himself).

Chair proposed that agenda items v) and vi) be considered together. Agreed.

v) To consider Allotment Plot rents for October 2024 (12-month notice required for any proposed increases in tenancy fees).

vi) To consider a proposal for the introduction of an annual service charge to cover the costs of water supply, waste disposal charges, maintenance, site amenity improvements and any other costs that are not covered by the annual tenancy charges currently levied.

After discussion, it was noted that the allotment rents have not risen for a number of years, and that members believed that the introduction of a service charge (to cover expenditure such as water supply, waste disposals and site improvements) would be confusing and difficult to administer given the differing sizes of allotment plots across the 4 town sites.

As a result of their deliberations, and in light of the site improvements planned across all the allotment sites in town, it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, that the rents payable for allotment plots be amended as follows (from October 2024). Notice to be given to existing allotment tenants at renewal in October 2023 and publicised in the allotment newsletter, on social media, on our website and on the noticeboards (see iv) above):

Half Plot – to rise from £25 per annum to £30

Full Plot – to rise from £42 per annum to £50

Extra-Large Plot – to rise from £48 per annum to £60

No additional service charges to be introduced or levied at this time. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please note and liaise with admin team to convey this decision to tenants by way of the media referred to above ensuring that adequate and statutory notice is given to all tenants.

Continued overleaf.

Axminster Town Council

Office Hours
Monday to Thursday
9am – 4pm

Mayor: Cllr Jill Farrow
Town Clerk: Paul Hayward



THE GUILDHALL
WEST STREET
AXMINSTER
DEVON
EX13 5NX

Tel. 01297 32088

www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk

Email: Clerk@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk

It was also noted that the Admin team were continuing their remapping of the allotment sites as part of a wider asset review project and that this task would allow a more accurate assessment of plot sizes across the four sites in the future. A more precise charging methodology could be considered once this work was undertaken ie. on an exact plot area basis. Members asked to be kept up to date as this project moved ahead.

OC23/037

To consider matters pertaining to allotments in the parish(continued):

vii) To consider suggestion that the water supply at North Street and Millwey Rise be improved with the introduction of an additional mains-fed "trough" which will both fill 'on-demand' but also capture water during period of heavy rainfall. (This alleviates the issues of low water pressure at both sites).

Members were in broad agreement with the principle of the provision of this additional amenity but asked that consultation take place with users at the respective sites to ensure that any such installations would be used (as opposed to taps).

It was proposed by Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Vice-Chair, that – subject to the consultation responses – the expenditure be delegated to the Clerk and the Chair of Operations Committee to authorise if the troughs were going to be acceptable to allotment users. Estimated costs £250 per trough with labour and fittings additional. Resolved unanimously.

OC23/038

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Cemetery:

Please refer to agenda items OC23/038 (IC) (to be considered in Part Two due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted).

OC23/039

To consider matters pertaining to Council plant/equipment and vehicles:

Please refer to agenda items OC23/039 (IC) (to be considered in Part Two due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted).

OC23/040

To consider matters pertaining to public rights of way / footpaths in the parish (P3):

i) To receive a report from Clerk on current status and cyclical maintenance programme and to note recent P3 grant decision by DCC.

Noted.

OC23/041

To consider matters pertaining to Health and Safety and receive update report on compliance progress:

i) To consider renewal of the annual H&S consultancy service for FY23-24 with existing H&S supplier.

Proposed by Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Continued overleaf.

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

OC23/042

To consider the final draft of the Axminster Town Council Asset Register (compiled as at 31st March 2023) and to receive report from Clerk on matters arising from the annual review of the register.

At the request of the RFO, this matter was deferred until the next meeting of the FULL Council (scheduled for 12th June 2023). Deferment proposed by Chair. Resolved unanimously.

OC23/043

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

Clerk reported that an urgent matter had arisen regarding a tenant of one of the Council's properties. Consent was sought to raise this in Part Two (for members awareness only). As the matter was relating to a confidential tenancy agreement, this was agreed to by the Chair.

OC23/044

Date of next scheduled meeting for the committee; 3rd July 2023 – 7pm (Guildhall)

Noted.

OC23/045

Vice-Chair 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 Cllr. Willey. Resolved unanimously.

The Chair proposed a brief adjournment before the meeting moved into Part Two (Confidential session). Resolved. Meeting adjourned for 10 minutes.

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

Continued overleaf.

THIS SECTION IS LEFT INTENTIONALLY BLANK

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

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

OC23/038 (IC) – see earlier agenda item.

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Cemetery:

i) Matters pertaining to an existing plot/memorial which require a decision of the Committee (or a recommendation to FULL Council); to receive report from Clerk.

Clerk outlined a sensitive matter regarding three previous interments in the cemetery

It was subsequently proposed from the Chair that matters relating to this incident be delegated to the Clerk to resolve but that a further report should come to this committee for reference once all arrangements had been made. Resolved unanimously.

ii) Matters pertaining to cemetery grass and grounds maintenance; to receive report from Clerk. After receipt of the report on ongoing challenges with grounds maintenance (predominately, grass cutting) arrangements at the town cemetery and at Jubilee Field, it was proposed by Cllr. Farrow, seconded by the Chair, that there was a financial and logistical justification for the contracting out of these works for at least the next 12 months by way of a fixed tender exercise. Resolved unanimously.

Delegated authority was afforded to the Clerk (and Council Administrator) to prepare the draft tender document, works specification and contractual terms with this document to be reviewed by the OPSCOMM as soon as was possible. In the meantime, the use of contractors on an ad-hoc basis to maintain service delivery was approved within the Council's existing budget for such works. Noted.

Because of the value of this proposed contract, the final approval of this decision was deferred to the FULL Council for approval. Clerk: please note and add to FULL agenda.

iii) Matters pertaining to assessment of cemetery memorials; to receive report from Clerk. Report noted and contents acknowledged re: actions required and training to be undertaken. *The matter was duly delegated to the Clerk to take forward as quickly as could be arranged.*

iv) Matters pertaining to the felling of a tree on the cemetery site on safety grounds; to receive report from Clerk. After reviewing the three quotes received, members voted for Contractor D at a cost of £1995 for the tree works identified as urgent (on safety and amenity grounds). These were required at the cemetery, Jubilee Field and at Woodbury allotments. Proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr. Willey. Resolved unanimously.

Continued overleaf.

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

OC23/039 (IC) – see earlier agenda item.

To consider matters pertaining to Council plant/equipment and vehicles:

To receive a report from Clerk on the current status of the Council's plant and equipment inventory and also the Council's vehicle fleet and to consider recommendations for a replacement vehicle to suit Council's anticipated operational requirements (including movement of plant and machinery between sites under the Council's jurisdiction).

Clerk had provided a written report to members on the current asset/equipment held by the Council (for the purposes of undertaking grounds maintenance noting its age, condition, value and efficacy).

After discussion, it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, that the Council's Kubota Tractor asset (and associated attachments) & the larger of the two STIGA ride-on mowers be sold on the basis that this equipment was surplus to requirements and not capable of delivering the maintenance outcomes that were now needed, following recent land asset acquisitions.

The arrangements for the disposal of this equipment were to be delegated to the Clerk to execute, with a final referral to the Chair of Council, and the Chair of the Operations Committee, prior to any agreement being reached and sale agreed.

Furthermore, the substantive proposal also noted the equipment which was required by the grounds-team to effectively carry out their duties and, again, the procurement of this equipment was delegated to the Clerk to arrange subject to adequate consultation with suppliers and any necessary testing of such equipment prior to purchase to ensure that the purchase would adequately and suitably provide benefit to Council's grounds-team employees.

Because of the value of this proposed asset disposal, and in line with the Council's extant financial regulations, the final approval of this decision was deferred to the FULL Council for approval. Clerk: please note and add to FULL agenda.

As the meeting had now been open for two hours, the Chair proposed that the Council's standing orders be suspended to allow this meeting to continue. Resolved.

The members of the committee then considered the Council's works vehicle needs, noting the report provided by the Clerk which outlined the forthcoming cessation of the existing works vehicle contract. In line with the decisions made above, it was proposed by Cllr. Willey, seconded by the Vice-Chair, that the Council should seek quotes for the provision (by way of a commercial vehicle lease) for a medium-to-long wheelbase panel van, with towbar, safety and utility features.

Continued overleaf.

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

OC23/039 (IC) – see earlier agenda item.

To consider matters pertaining to Council plant/equipment and vehicles (continued):

A request was also put forward that options for an EV variant should also be obtained. The substantive motion also provided for the extension of the existing vehicle contract (if the lease company were amenable to that extension) or the short-term rental of an alternative vehicle if need be. Such operational matters were delegated to the Clerk to arrange as necessary. Finally, authority was provided for the acquisition of a suitable trailer (outright purchase as an asset) to enable the transportation of any equipment to the Town Council's land holdings across Axminster.

The motion was resolved unanimously. Clerk: Please obtain quotes and bring back before Operations Committee as a matter of urgency.

OC23/043 (IC)

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

This matter had been deferred into Part Two by an earlier resolution.

i) Matters pertaining to correspondence received from a tenant.

Correspondence had been received by the Clerk which was considered by members. In response, Clerk was asked to respond to the tenant as directed by the committee.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 21.35hrs.

Signed Date.....

**Minutes of the meeting of the Operations Committee held on Tuesday,
5th June 2023 at 7.00 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall**

Minutes approved: Part ONE version (Redacted)