

# Axminster Town Council

Office Hours  
Monday to Thursday  
9am – 4pm

Mayor: Cllr Jill Farrow  
Town Clerk: Paul Hayward

[www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk)



THE GUILDHALL  
WEST STREET  
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Tel. 01297 32088

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## Minutes of the meeting of the Operations Committee held on Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 7.00 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall

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

Meeting began at 7.00pm.

One member of the public in attendance.

Also present, Clerk to the Council, Paul Hayward.

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

### Public Forum:

The member of the public made a representation which included the following matters:

- i) *Hanging baskets at South Street; issues with possible building development at that site.*
- ii) *Allotments; untidy plots, waste tipping and non-cultivation causing nuisance.*
- iii) *Request for improved water supply to North Street allotments.*

Chair thanked the speaker for attending and confirmed that his comments would be noted and considered at the relevant section of tonight's meeting.

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

***The Chair subsequently closed the public forum session at 7.15pm.***

### OC23/001

**To note members of the committee present:**

Cllrs. Walden (JW) (Chair), Brooker (ABr.) (Vice-Chair), Burrough (KB) (*arrived 7.25pm*), Farrow (JF), Holt (SH), Paice (EP) and Sedgewick (AS). Meeting was quorate.

### OC23/002

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

No members have sent their apologies.

### OC23/003

**To note members of the committee not otherwise in attendance.**

Cllr. Spurway (MS). Noted.

### OC23/004

**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.**

None declared.

*Continued overleaf.*

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## OC23/005i)

To consider and, if thought fit, approve the minutes of the Operations Committee meeting held 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and to consider any matters arising (not included within this agenda as business to be attended to.)

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

Chair signed the approved minutes accordingly.

## OC23/005ii)

To consider any matters arising (not included within this agenda as business to be attended to) from the meeting of the 15<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and to receive progress report from Clerk:

Clerk confirmed that all matters from that meeting of the 15th November 2022 were either complete, in progress or subject to further discussion below on this meeting agenda. Noted.

## OC23/006

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:

### OC23/007

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

Members reviewed this new 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. Chair thanked Clerk for creation and population of the workplan document. Members asked that future versions of the Workplan be sent as Excel files rather than as a PDF so that members could sort/filter themselves to analyse the data more effectively. Noted.

It was agreed that this was a "living document" (originally designed to allow the officers to track progress and record outcomes) but that it was beneficial for all members to have access to it to see what was being delivered in their name.

Chair asked that this subject remain as a standing item on future agendas. Noted.

### OC23/008

To consider "scope and purpose" of the Operations Committee in conjunction with a review of the Committee's Terms of Reference.

Chair proposed that this matter be deferred to the June meeting to allow time for Clerk, JF and AS to undertake a review of the extant document (ToR) and return to OPSCOMM with a revised version for members to consider and, if thought fit, approve. That, in turn, would allow for a wider discussion and consideration of the committee's "scope and purpose". Noted.

Clerk: Please liaise with AS and JF to undertake this ToR review/revision exercise. Noted.

*Continued overleaf.*

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## **OC23/009**

**To consider outcomes from Council's Risk Management Assessment review (see Strategy & Finance Committee meeting held 27/01/2023) and to decide upon forward progress with their recommendations as they relate to the business of the Operations Committee.**

Chair proposed that the RMA Review document be noted and that any risk mitigation measures outlined or proposed were delegated to the Clerk to either enact/execute or to bring back to OPSCOMM for approval as appropriate. Seconded SH. Furthermore, that the subject of Risk Management be added as a standing item to all future OPSCOPMM agendas.

Resolved unanimously. Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

## **OC23/010**

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

i) To consider proposals for repairs to cobbled area in courtyard post-decking platform removal mindful of the buildings listed building status.

SH suggested that Clerk investigate all options (in conjunction with the listed building officers at EDDC) and bring a range of options back to OPSCOMM for their decision as soon as was possible. Given that Council's resources were financially constrained in this forthcoming fiscal year, Clerk was directed to seek the most cost-efficient manner to address the problem. Noted. Proposed by SH, seconded by JF. Resolved unanimously.

ii) To ratify internal improvement works within Arts Café authorised under Chair's delegated authority.

Proposed by JW, seconded by ABr. Resolved nem con (SH abstained).

Clerk: please note. Tenants have already been notified at the time their tenancy invoice was issued.

## **OC23/011**

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

i) Town Gateway Signage – see **Part Two business below** (commercially confidential quotes to be considered)

ii) Update on Town Map installation project.

Clerk provided update on map illustration progress and also with regards to the physical installation of the town map mounting boards and frames across 10 locations in the town. Noted.

iii) Update on Town Fingerpost installation project.

Clerk provided an update on this project and advised that he and the Council Administrator were due to meet the commissioned supplier shortly to iron out a few niggles and queries prior to the post being built and supplied.

*Continued overleaf.*

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## OC23/012

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

i) To receive update on tree planting project within Jubilee Field site and to consider further planting of shrubs and plants (proposing that such matters be duly delegated to officers and nominated members of this committee).

Clerk provided a verbal report to members on the outcome of the tree planting event in February. SH advised that he and the Hon. Tree Warden had met with a local expert (in terms of wild-flower meadow creation) and that a report would be forthcoming shortly with regards to proposals for this planting year. Noted.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that any such works should proceed as long as the proposed expenditure was within the £10,000 set aside at a previous meeting for such landscaping and planting works. Resolved unanimously.

ii) To consider request from parishioner for works to boundary fencing adjacent to site of former tree (now felled on safety grounds).

After discussion and a review of the circumstances that had led to the purported damage to the shared boundary fence, it was proposed by SH, seconded by Chair, that Clerk be duly delegated to negotiate with the landowner involved to arrange the repair to the section of fencing in question up to a maximum value of £200. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please note and action accordingly. If negotiations are unsuccessful, please bring this matter back to Committee for further consideration.

iii) To consider request from parishioner for the planting of a memorial tree on Jubilee Field.

It was proposed by SH, seconded by JF, that – regrettably – the Council was unable to accede to this request. However, if the parishioner wishes to make a donation to the Council towards the cost of future tree planting, this would be gratefully received. Alternatively, the parishioner could be encouraged to liaise with the Axminster Climate Action Group (ACAG) who were planning to organise tree planting in the wider parish. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please convey this decision to the resident involved.

On a separate matter, SH mentioned that he had been approached by several members of the public asking about the proposed timeframe for the delivery of the 360 degree walking path (hardstanding) around the field. Clerk advised that he was struggling to find contractors willing to take on the project and asked members to forward any contacts they had that could be referenced and their work quality independently verified. Noted.

*Continued overleaf.*

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## **OC23/013**

### **To consider matters pertaining to the Town Cemetery:**

i) To consider proposed arrangements for Friday afternoon, and weekend burials/interments following representations from local Funeral Director.

After lengthy discussion and review of the Council's recently revised and updated burial regulations, it was proposed by Chair, seconded by KB, that Clerk (as Burial Officer) communicate to all local funeral directors that ashes interments on Friday afternoon could continue without issue; however, ashes interments at the weekend could not be accommodated within the Town Cemetery due to staffing resource constraints. Burials, however, could be accommodated as the burial arrangements were contracted out to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party by the relevant funeral director. Similarly, burials required at short notice due to requirements relating to religious faith would always be accommodated as far as possible by the burial authority.

Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please note and action accordingly.

ii) To consider report from Clerk on suggested disposal and acquisition of cemetery (grounds) plans and equipment assets.

Clerk asked that this matter be deferred to the next OPSCOMM so that a report received only today (6/3) could be read, considered and circulated to members for their perusal and review. Chair agreed. Noted.

iii) To consider future planning of memorial Safety Inspections and Assessments and to agree upon a scheme of delegation to ensure that safety within the cemetery grounds is paramount.

Chair proposed that all H&S matters relating to SIAM (Safety Inspection and Assessment of Memorials) were to be delegated to the Clerk (the Burial Officer) to attend to as per compliance with the legislation pertaining to such matters. Any significant risks were to be mitigated as far as possible and a report brought to OPSCOMM outlining any further actions considered necessary. Clerk was also directed to prepare a SIAM Policy for OPSCOMM review and approval.

Clerk: please note and action accordingly.

iv) To consider matters pertaining to unauthorised access into the cemetery from adjacent houses.

After receiving a report from the Clerk on this matter, it was proposed by ABr (seconded by Chair) that Clerk should seek quotes for the fencing of the entire boundary line between the cemetery and the houses to the east to prevent unauthorised access through the cemetery site (ie. to ensure access only through the main gate off the Chard Road). Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and arrange for quotes to be prepared/provided. Bring the matter back to OPSCOMM as soon as possible.

*Continued overleaf.*

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## OC23/014

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

i) To receive report from Clerk on the recent acquisition of a Tower Scaffold system, the subsequent training of staff to enable the safe and certified use of that equipment and the consequential issue of storage (see vi)  
Update received from Clerk. Noted.

ii) To ratify the recent expenditure (approved under Chair's/Clerk's delegated authority) on:  
a) Replacement of dressing room water heater  
b) replacement of dressing room (A) WC pan and cistern after damage caused by hirer.  
**Ratification proposed by Chair, seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously.**

iii) To consider update from Clerk on recent Intruder Alarm service and to consider proposals for system enhancements / upgrades.  
As a result of the report received, Clerk was asked to obtain further quotes for the works required in relation to the upgrading of the Guildhall security system (including CCTV). Noted

iv) To consider update from Clerk on recent Fire Alarm service and to consider proposals for system enhancements / upgrades.  
As a result of the report received, Clerk was asked to obtain further quotes for the works required in relation to the upgrading of the fire alarm system. Noted

v) To consider Council office working arrangements and opening hours (specifically, Fridays). Clerk was asked to prepare a schedule for members of Council outlining periods when physical access to the Clerk's office would be restricted to allow time for administrative and strategic works to be undertaken with interruption. This was felt to be critical to the smooth running of the Council offices and to enable the delivery of reports, documents and minutes in a timely and efficient manner. Access via email or telephone would be unaffected. Noted.

vi) To consider request for additional storage amenity at rear of Guildhall for chairs, tables and other items.  
This request was felt to be both unaffordable and impractical and the Clerk was therefore directed to liaise with the Guildhall Management Committee to determine whether a more cost-effective and practical solution for storage of chairs, tables etc could be accommodated within the Guildhall building. This could require some alterations within the building. Clerk would seek advice from the relevant parties with regards to fire safety, licencing etc and return to OPSCOMM with a further report as soon as possible. Noted

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## **OC23/014**

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

vii) To consider request for replacement clock in main hall area (to right of stage front).

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by JF, that the clock (which was both damaged and kept poor time) should be removed and the space it occupies plastered over as an aesthetic improvement to the building (on the basis that the vast majority of hall users had either a watch or a phone device on which the time was displayed). Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please note and action accordingly in conjunction with the Guildhall Manager. Please check beforehand with previous DPS as to whether the clock retains any heritage value of note.

viii) To consider report from Clerk on forthcoming cessation of building broadband provision and to consider proposals to upgrade building connectivity to Fibre for improved efficiency and amenity.

It was proposed by SH, seconded by JW, that Clerk should be delegated to proceed with the switch to fibre connectivity into the Guildhall (to coincide with the expiry of the current telephony contract on or around the 20<sup>th</sup> April 2023). Matters relating to contract term, value, bandwidth etc were to be delegated to the Clerk to consider and agree upon in the best interests of the Council, the Guildhall and its users.

Clerk: please note and action accordingly in conjunction with the Guildhall Manager

Chair proposed that Standing Orders be suspended to permit the meeting to move past the 2hr mark. Resolved unanimously. Noted.

## **OC23/015**

### **To consider matters pertaining to Council vehicles:**

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

In line with the deferral requested above on agenda item OC23/13ii) the Clerk asked that this matter also be deferred to a future OPSCOMM meeting as the report that members required was intrinsically linked to the ongoing consideration of Council's plant and equipment needs (in relation to vehicle capacity and style/format). Chair agreed. Noted.

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## OC23/016

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

i) To consider update on defibrillator provision in the parish; Clerk to report on progress. Report from Clerk on progress with defibrillator roll-out was noted with thanks. The Town Council will shortly have 11 operational defibrillators under its control taking the town's coverage (including AEDs in private hands) to nearly 20.

ii) To consider request for approved expenditure of £1200 (net) for summer planting materials, plants and consumables for Minster Green, Guildhall, roundabout and South Street basket displays

**Chair proposed that this expenditure be approved as a benefit to all residents. Seconded by ABr. Resolved unanimously.** Clerk: please liaise with plant supplier and planting volunteers to coordinate delivery and planting.

*Chair repeated his thanks to the team of volunteers that both planted and watered the flowers through the season. Their efforts were greatly appreciated, both by Councillors and the public.*

iii) To re-consider parishioner request to provide an additional VAS (vehicles activated speed) unit on Trinity Hill Road (on land within Axminster Parish) \*

\* This matter was deferred until Spring 2023 by an earlier meeting of this committee.

**It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that no further VAS poles or devices be purchased or installed until more tangible evidence of speed reduction could be obtained.**

**Resolved unanimously.**

iv) To receive report from Clerk on progress with "Green Wedge" / E-bikes (Urban Renewal) project and preliminary works.

Report received with thanks. Members asked Clerk to keep Council up-to-date with progress with the SWR grant (E-bikes) application and to provide a copy of the "Green Wedge" evidence report as soon as this was prepared & collated by the admin. team so that future project works on the site can also be costed and evaluated. Noted.

v) To receive a general report from Clerk on progress with all previously agreed Operational actions and tasks; members to consider and decide upon amendments to prioritisation of actions, approve any deferrals or delays as are deemed operationally necessary and efficacious.

*Chair mentioned that this subject had been discussed at length earlier in the meeting and that no further consideration was necessary. Agreed by all present. Noted.*

Continued overleaf.



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## **OC23/017**

### **To consider matters pertaining to Health and Safety and progress with compliance:**

Clerk advised that he and the admin team were working with the 3<sup>rd</sup> party consultant to create a working H&S policy and protocol and this would be brought to OPSCOMM (via the H&S Working Party) as soon as possible. Noted.

## **OC23/018**

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

Clerk reported that the allotments gates at Higher Woodbury had been replaced as requested by the Allotment Association members. Noted.

## **OC23/019**

### **Date of next scheduled meeting for the committee; 5th June 2023 – 7pm (Guildhall)**

JF queried the length of time between meetings of the committee (ie. March to June). Clerk advised that a scheduled meeting in May could not be accommodated due to the number of Bank Holidays in that month, the local council elections and the coronation of HM The King. Clerk confirmed that if any business arose that was deemed urgent, he would liaise with the Chair to convene an extraordinary meeting to attend to that business accordingly. Noted.

## **OC23/020**

**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 the Chair. Resolved unanimously.**

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

**OC23/011 (IC) – see earlier agenda item.**

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

i) Town Gateway Signage – To consider quotations for the procurement and installation of replacement Gateway Signage (for the promotion of tourism/economic development/visitor amenity) (commercially confidential quotes to be considered)

Three quotes were considered from suppliers S, M and C. After due consideration, **it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by SH, that the contract be awarded to supplier S for the manufacture and supply of 4 x polyurethane composite Gateway signs using the design previously agreed upon at a cost of £7,857 plus VAT. Resolved unanimously.**

Clerk: please note and initiate order accordingly. It was noted that agreement for siting of the new Gateway signs on the public highway has been previously approved by DCC Highways team.

*Continued overleaf.*

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## OC23/021 (IC) – Section 106 / CIL update and consideration of projects proposed.

### To consider matters pertaining to the EDDC S106 / CIL allocations for Axminster Parish.

To consider a report from Clerk following recent conversations with the EDDC (locum) S106 officer and to agree upon any projects that Council wish to take forward using these funds / allocations.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by KB, that £111.62 of the Council's CIL allocation be used to fund infrastructure expenditure that would benefit all residents in Axminster; this will ensure that the CIL allocation (which expires on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023) is not lost. Resolved unanimously. Clerk: please note and allocate expenditure accordingly amending the EDDC CIL report to reflect the CIL spending in FY22-23.

Furthermore, it was proposed by the Chair (seconded by JF) that the Council approve the virement of up to 15% \* of the £137,488.72 S106 (Millwey Rise Play Extension Project allocation) funding available towards the costs of employing a play consultant to ensure the on-time, on-budget delivery of the project, in conjunction with EDDC (the freeholder), the chosen play equipment supplier (TBA) and the Town Council. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk was duly delegated to seek quotes for these play consultancy services and to liaise with them to outline the project brief and concurrently continue negotiations with EDDC Housing Team to bring forward the long-term lease of the land parcel adjacent to the existing Millwey Rise Play Area from EDDC to ATC for the permanent siting of the play area extension specifically designed to provide play and recreation for those children with disabilities and accessibility challenges. Noted.

\* This 15% figure was advised to the Clerk/RFO by EDDC S106 Officer as the maximum legitimate and permitted "admin" virement percentage from the funding available under S106 for the delivery of play equipment at Millwey Rise (referred to as Project 309).

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 21.15hrs.

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

Minutes of the meeting of the Operations Committee held on Tuesday,  
6<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 7.00 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall

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