

AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE VIRTUAL BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT 7.00 p.m. ON MONDAY, 24th AUGUST 2020

1. PRESENT: Cllr. A.L.Young (Town Mayor), Cllr. J.J. Farrow, (Deputy Mayor), Cllr M. Mynard, Cllr. Mrs. S.L.N.Leat, Cllr. A.G. Sedgewick, Cllr. J.W. Walden, the Town Clerk, the Administrative Assistant and the Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer. 2 members of the public, 0 representative of the press.
2. APOLOGIES/NOT PRESENT: Cllr. M.N. Adamson-Drage, Cllr. Doherty, Cllr. A.E. Bourner, Cllr. D.J. Moore, and Cllr. Spurway
3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

CLLR. YOUNG, IN HER CAPACITY AS GUILDHALL MANAGER FOR WHICH SHE DECLARES A PECUNIARY INTEREST, HAS A DISPENSATION TO SPEAK ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE GUILDHALL PROVIDED THE PECUNIARY INTEREST IS NOT OF OVER-RIDING SIGNIFICANCE, ALSO A PERSONAL INTEREST AS A MEMBER OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION.

CLLRS. FARROW, LEAT AND SEDGEWICK EACH DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING MEMBERS OF THE AXMINSTER GUILDHALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE IN RESPECT OF ANY ITEMS RELATING TO THE GUILDHALL.

CLLR. FARROW DECLARED AN INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF AXMINSTER TWINNING ASSOCIATION AND A GOVERNOR OF AXMINSTER COMMUNITY PRIMARY ACADEMY AND AS A JOINT TENANT OF A TOWN COUNCIL ALLOTMENT AT WOODBURY PARK ALLOTMENTS

CLLR SEDGEWICK DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST IN RESPECT OF THE FOLLOWING:
WIFE OF THE RECTOR OF ST MARYS (MINSTER) CHURCH.

CLLR. WALDEN DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNORS OF AXMINSTER SECONDARY SCHOOL.

4. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 27th JULY 2020: had not yet been approved and adopted by the Town Council, will be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF ABOVE MEETING: None.

6. PUBLIC FORUM: None.

7. COVID 19 RELATED ADJUSTMENTS: The Town Clerk raised the issue of cleaning arrangements for contractors where they would be working in spaces occupied by staff or tenants.. The Mayor said that hand sanitisers should be put in place and they should be wear masks. She said that she had drawn up a Risk Assessment which she would forward to the contractors and request a copy of their Risk Assessment. Cllr. Leat said that the matter of maximum occupancy should be set out in the Risk Assessment, to ensure maximum safety of all concerned. The Town Clerk will liaise with the tenant and contractors.

The Mayor will order the sanitizing stations for the Guildhall. She said that it was not appropriate for the Town Council to purchase a fogging machine.

8. FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF PROVISION OF INEXPENSIVE ANDROID TABLETS FOR ALL COUNCILLORS TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY OF MEMBERS' AREA ON WEBSITE: Cllr. Walden reported

that he had sought advice from to someone who works for the firm which supplies some of the District Councils. He had been informed that there were advantages in all Councillors having the same equipment both in terms of equality and compliance with General Data Protection Regulations. However, some Councillors had problems with receipt of emails. Cllr. Walden suggested that the advice of Cosmic or the Council's technology contractor be sought. There was divergence of opinion among members regarding the justification or necessity for making universal, standardises provision. Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Young proposed that the Town Council should not proceed, at this stage, with the provision of a tablet for each Councillor. Agreed. The situation will be reviewed at the September meeting of the Town Council.

9. FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) Future Short Term and Long Term Financial Strategy: - a briefing paper had been circulated. The Mayor suggested that a comprehensive list of all the projects proposed for the present financial year be sent to Councillors so that these could be prioritised on a Health and Safety basis or where failure to undertake the work would have a detrimental effect on the condition of the building, and those which did not fall into that category could be put back due to the uncertain financial situation.

Councillors' overall view was that it was impossible to plan for every contingency. Cllr. Farrow proposed that items 1 and 2 on the briefing paper be dealt with at a much later date and that items 3 and 4 be considered at the next meeting on the basis of the points made during these discussions. Cllr. Walden seconded the proposal. Agreed.

b) Annual Insurance Renewal – the insurers had indicated that they were willing to extend the cover until the Town Council meeting in September. Following discussion, the Town Clerk was instructed to find out when the properties were last valued, how frequently the insurers expected this exercise to be done and to obtain quotes for doing this work.

c) Re-instatement of Awarding of Grants – Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Mynard, proposed that the Town Council re-instate consideration of applications for funding. Agreed. Any such applications, including those under consideration at the time of suspension, should be submitted on the basis of the revised policies.

10. PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS

a) **Guildhall:** the Mayor gave an update on the progress of re-arranging the offices.

b Old Courthouse

- i) General Update on Repairs: the specification for remedial works to the damp penetration was awaited; installation of sub-meters at the Courtroom was scheduled for the following week; no water penetration had been reported in the retail unit but the problem of lack of capacity of the gutters in windy weather remained.
- ii) Garden – the Clerk stated that the garden needed a good sorting out over the winter, with some plants needing thinning and that there was scope for some new planting. The Town Mayor added that some of the plants, such as the fig tree were inappropriate both in terms of size and position for the garden. She felt that there was probably some member of the local community who would give advice on a voluntary basis.

c Cemetery

- i) Digital Mapping -nothing to report.
- ii) Buildings – a local contractor had been asked to provide a quote for repairing the chapel roof.
- iii) Equipment – the Town Clerk reported damage to part of one of the ride-on mowers. A new heater will be bought for the former Chapel.

d Amenities:

- i. Allotments – the Administrative Assistant said that all tenants had been contacted and had been given to the end of the month to mention any possible incidence of asbestos on their plots. She will contact the contractors once she has inspected all the reports received.

The Town Clerk reported on a small tree which had fallen across the Gamberlake Brook. She had arranged for a contractor to remove it. Our insurers expect trees to be inspected annually because of the increased prevalence of diseases which make trees more liable to fail.

Cllr. Young asked whether the electric weed wand had been bought. The Town Clerk said that she had not progressed this because it appeared that these would require a power source, which was not always practical. Cllr. Walden said that inexpensive, battery operated ones were available at a cost of £20 and the Town Mayor asked him to purchase two.

- ii. War Memorial – The Town Clerk said that she was awaiting further information from the Conservation Officer. Councillors asked that this matter be progressed as quickly as possible so that it could be done in time for this year's ceremony..
- iii. Jubilee Fountain – The Town Clerk has spoken to the contractor who had quoted for the war memorial but was awaiting a response. A site meeting had been held with an electrical contractor and a response was awaited. A quote will also be sought from a different contractor. Cllr. Walden felt that conservation of this structure was important for the morale of the community and the benefit of visitors.
- iv. Jubilee Field – the grass in the play area is not being cut. Cllr. Walden has referred the matter to the District Council. Cllr. Walden mentioned that the works to level the field to prepare for the kickabout area would require the temporary closure of the field.

11. MATTERS OF URGENCY:

- a. Fly Tipping – it was agreed that a letter be sent to the District Council asking that enforcement action be taken in respect of the state of the land between the West Street Car Park and the houses off West Close.
- b. Cutting of Amenity Grassland - a problem in Loretto Road had been brought to the attention of the Town Clerk, who is trying to establish if it is tied to any house ownership. The Town Mayor said that she hoped that the ownership of all the orphan areas could be established once the Digital Mapping was sorted out.
- c. Use of Van - Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Mynard proposed that the Lengthsman be authorised to use the van to travel to and from his training venue as this would not invalidate the terms of the insurance policy. Agreed.

Cllr. Farrow 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. Cllr. Leat seconded the proposal. Agreed.

12. QUOTES FOR PROPOSED WORKS:

- a) First Aid Training for Staff – the quotes received were not as requested and the matter will be reconsidered when the correct quotes are available.
- b) The Town Clerk said that she had been investigating the hire of a chipper to dispose of the arisings at the Cemetery. The potential cost would be £25 per day but some of the items were not suitable for conifers. Further investigations will be carried out.

13. TENANCY MATTERS:

a) Old Courthouse - Following discussion Cllr. Young proposed that the amendments set out in the solicitor's letter be approved. Cllr. Walden seconded the proposal. Carried.

Cllr. Farrow asked how to resolve the issue of the tables in the garden. She said that there is table in the public area of the garden which is used by the café owners. The point of contention appears to be that that table is being reserved for café use only and not being made available to the public. Cllr. Walden said that his concern related to the present COVID 19 situation and for that reason they should be removed. Cllr. Young proposed that a letter be sent to the tenant restating the Town Council's position. Cllr. Walden seconded the proposal. Carried.

b) Allotment – the Town Clerk is seeking information regarding the payment of ex gratia payments.

14. MATTER OF URGENCY: Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that £100 be donated to a charity in memory of a Town Council volunteer who had died recently at a comparatively young age. Agreed.

Signed Date