

AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEES HELD AT NOON ON FRIDAY, 2ND JANUARY 2015 AT THE GUILDHALL.

1. PRESENT: Cllr. J.W. Walden (Town Mayor), Cllr. Cllr. D.R.H. Hull (Deputy Mayor), P.G. Hayward, A.T. Moulding and Cllr. Mrs. Spiller and the Town Clerk. No members of the public or press.

2. APOLOGIES: Cllr. G.S. Godbeer, Cllr. Mrs. S.L.N.Leat, Cllr. L.A. Rowe.

CLLRS. D.R.H. HULL, P.G. HAYWARD, A. T. MOULDING AND MRS. S.R. SPILLER EACH DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING MEMBERS OF THE AXMINSTER GUILDHALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE.

CLLR. D.R.H. HULL DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF THE AXMINSTER MUSEUM COMMITTEE

CLLRS. HAYWARD AND WALDEN EACH DECLARED AN INTEREST AS BEING FRIENDS OF AXMINSTER TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE.

3. PUBLIC FORUM: None.

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 7TH NOVEMBER 2014: these minutes, not yet having been approved and adopted by the full Town Council, will be signed at a later meeting.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7TH NOVEMBER 2014: there were no matters which would not be covered by the agenda for the present meeting.

6. MATTERS OF URGENCY: None.

7. PRECEPT PRELIMINARIES: although the cost centres had been discussed at the previous meeting, the Town Clerk said that information which had been received since that meeting made it prudent to reconsider them.

a) Administration: the Town Clerk said that considering progress against budget to the end of November that the allocation for Telephony costs be increased by £200. Cllr. Hayward said that he had had some initial discussions about changing supplier and these had suggested that a similar package could be obtained at a more competitive price. The Deputy Town Clerk will make contact with the existing provider to see whether a more competitive package could be obtained from them. The Town Mayor's Allowance was increased by £250. and professional fees by £2000 to allow preliminary advice to be sought on how it might be possible to achieve disabled access to the upper storeys at the Guildhall and the Old Courthouse, in both of which varying levels have caused problems in addressing this issue. If possible solutions are identified then this work would be included in the budget for 2016-2017. While a small sum had been allowed in the previous year in case there was an election to fill the casual vacancy, full Town Council elections were due in May 2015 and an appropriate sum had been allowed for this. For the same reason, the budget for training had been increased by £500.

b) Allotments: the Town Clerk said that she had checked water consumption at all the allotment sites and the budget for water had been increased by £375 to reflect the compound effect of higher charges and increased usage by tenants. The budget for skip hire had been doubled to reflect increased costs arising from fly-tipping.

c) Amenities: The budgets for seats and noticeboards had been increased by £350 and £75 respectively as these were known to be in need of treatment/repair, sometimes as the result

of vandalism. Cllr. Hayward put the case from some members of the Chamber of Commerce for a greater commitment by the Town Council towards Christmas lighting. After discussion it was agreed that £1000 be kept in the budget to cover costs relating to the Town Council lights on Minster Green but that a sum be included in the budget to match fund any sums raised by the traders themselves, up to a maximum commitment of £2000. Councillors were clear that the Town Council would be responsible only for the lighting of the birch tree and the deodar on the Minster Green. Any other lighting display would have to be organised by another body. The budget for floral displays was increased to cover the planters at the Guildhall. The Town Clerk said that the earmarked fund for Footpath Clearing had now been exhausted and she feared that there was a risk that the annual grant from Devon County Council would be reduced or even cut completely. She had spoken to the Hon. Footpath Warden who had said that £2000 was needed to cover clearing of vegetation on public footpaths within the town, such as Valley Path. A further £500 was included to cover the cost of clearing the cyclepath under the A35. The Town Clerk will discuss with Cllr. Jeffery whether there is a way this could be done mechanically, given the low headroom. £400 was included in the budget to cover the cost of any necessary repairs to machinery such as the water bowser and the grass topper and also fuel.

- d) Cemetery: the budget for water was increased from £220 to £300 to reflect current levels of usage and charges. The allowance for rates was increased from £3000 to £3150 to reflect the on-going impact of rate relief being phased out. Miscellaneous costs were increased to allow for provision of updated security provision.
- e) Employment: this budget was increased from £55499 to £71,500 to cover any increases in staff pay proposed by National Association of Local Councils and the cost of taking on an additional employee to work as a general handyman/assistant to the Cemetery Caretaker. Both these matters will be discussed shortly by the Employment Committee. Councillors felt there were many small jobs which needed to be done on an ad hoc basis which are a matter of civic pride as well as minor repairs/upkeep of Council properties.
- g) Guildhall: the budget for this cost centre was kept at £9000. This sum covers routine repairs and inspections. Any special projects such as replacement of stage dressing or updating of security systems will be considered separately.
- h) Loans: the budget for this cost centre was unchanged.
- i) Old Courthouse: the budget for this cost centre was increased by £1895 to cover any works which might be necessitated by changes in tenants.
- j) Risk and Emergency Planning: the budget for this cost centre was unchanged.
- k) Section 137 Spending and Other Donations: this will be considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee.
- l) Special Projects:
 - i. Guildhall:

In previous years, £15,000 has been included in the budget to cover major works at the Guildhall. Work on creating a storage area has been completed and the new boilers have been installed. Some progress has been made towards identifying options for updating the lighting in the main hall. Work on the stanchions remains outstanding. Other matters which have been raised for consideration include replacing of the stage dressing, upgrading of the closed circuit security system, the condition and lack of thermal efficiency of the doors between the outer and main foyers and the need for a dishwasher (it has been agreed in principle that this

should be funded from moneys the Guildhall Fundraising Account though there are some aspects which it may be deemed should be funded from non-fundraising moneys).

ii. Pippins:

It was not known what the state of progress is in respect of the expressions of interest from other bodies in the community to run Pippins as a Community Building and it may be prudent to include money in the budget to cover costs associated with this building into the coming year. Cllr. Walden will prepare a possible budget for this.

iii. Neighbourhood Plan;

In previous years £3000 has been included to build up a fund for a traffic survey in support of the Neighbourhood Plan.

A further grant of £2000 will be received from Central Government via the District Council. There is a possibility that further funding will be available from the Community Development Fund but this is not guaranteed so it may be prudent to budget for £5000 via the precept.

iv. Other Matters:

In the light of reduced spending on roads by Devon County Council would more frequent gully clearance be beneficial to prevent degradation of road surfaces.

Parishes Together Fund: as from next year, parishes will be required to match fund the contribution from County and District Councils.

Signed Date