

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 8th March 2021 at 7.00 p.m.
Under Regulation 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020

Present:

Town Mayor Cllr. Ms. J.J. Farrow
Deputy Town Mayor: Cllr. Mrs. A. G. Sedgewick,
Councillors: M.N. Adamson-Drage, (for parts of the meeting), C.A. Doherty,
 S.P. Holt, Mrs. S.L.N. Leat, S. Sleigh, M.D.G. Spurway, O.S. Tucker
 and J.W. Walden.

The Town Clerk (Miss H. Kirkcaldie), the Deputy Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer, (Mrs. Z. Adamson-Drage) (for part of meeting) and the Administrative Assistant (Mrs. S. Gay).

In attendance: A.T. Moulding.

7 Members of the public. 1 representative of the Press.

2021/0082 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cty/Dist. Cllr. I.L. Hall and Dist. Cllr. Jackson.

2021/0083 APPROVAL OF LONG-TERM ABSENCE: Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, proposed that Cllr. M. Mynard's absence from meetings for the next three months, if necessary, be approved. Agreed.

2021/0084 MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: None.

2021/0085 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: CLLRS. DOHERTY, FARROW, MRS. LEAT, MRS. SEDGEWICK AND SPURWAY EACH DECLARED PERSONAL INTERESTS 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. ADAMSON-DRAGE DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING THE SPOUSE OF THE DEPUTY-CLERK

CLLR. WALDEN DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF AXMINSTER COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE.

CLLR. WALDEN DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNORS OF AXE VALLEY ACADEMY, AS A MEMBER OF AXMINSTER SKATEPARK STEERING GROUP, AXMINSTER TWINNING ASSOCIATION AND AS BEING SAFEGUARDING LEAD FOR AXMINSTER YOUTH CLUB.

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2021/0086 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 8TH FEBRUARY 2021:

Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Doherty, proposed that these minutes be approved for accuracy. Agreed.

Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, proposed that they be adopted as policy. Agreed.

2021/0087 TOWN FORUM - THE FUTURE OF AXMINSTER: Several leading

representatives of the Axminster business community were present and stressed the fact that despite the perception of the economic havoc caused by the pandemic there was much local evidence of grass roots confidence in the local economy. Businesses were investing in it but there was a need to take advantages of the grants offered by central Government grant to maximise the opportunity to move the town forward for the benefit of the whole community and visitors to the town. Among points raised were:

- a. The need to close Trinity Square and Silver Street to vehicular traffic.
- b. The opportunities which would accrue to local business as a result of making Axminster a charging destination for electric vehicle tourism.
- c. The value of refreshing the exterior appearance of retail and commercial premises in the Town Centre.
- d. The need to address several road safety problems.
- e. That the Town Council should act as the “glue” to help achieve these objectives.
- f. That it was key for the Neighbourhood Plan to be completed to prevent others deciding Axminster’s future.
- g. That, for the same reason, all residents should respond to the Local Plan consultation before the closing date on 15th March.

2021/0088 TOWN FORUM – STREET-NAMING: Dist. Cllr. Moulding urged that when the Town Council next had an opportunity to name a new street the opportunity be taken to commemorate the late Wally Feller, a distinguished local journalist.

CLLR. WALDEN, SECONDED BY CLLR. MRS. LEAT, PROPOSED THAT AGENDA ITEM 14 BE BROUGHT FORWARD AT THIS POINT.

2021/0089 DISTRICT COUNCIL ADAPTATION, INNOVATION AND RESILIENCE

FUNDING: At the invitation of the Town Councillors, Dist. Cllr. Hayward, Portfolio Holder for Economy and Assets, informed them that there were two million pounds available to encourage post-COVID recovery and resilience. He urged the town to grasp the opportunities this funding offered as expressions of interest had to be submitted by 22nd March. He added that Axminster had been identified as one of the vulnerable towns in East Devon which would benefit from access to this funding.

Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that this matter be addressed further at the meeting on Monday evening.

CLLR. ADAMSON-DRAGE LEFT THE MEETING TEMPORARILY AT THIS POINT.

2021/0090 FINANCIAL MATTERS – APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS FOR FEBRUARY:

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Cllr. Walden seconded by Cllr. Leat, proposed that the payments as listed be approved.
Agreed.

2021/0091 RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT: The Deputy Clerk said that she was working on various matters ready for the conclusion of the current financial year and in preparation for the coming financial year.

2021/0092 FINANCIAL MATTERS –GRANT REQUEST FROM NOURISH:

CLLR. FARROW DECLARED A PECUNIARY INTEREST AS HER PARTNER VOLUNTEERS WITH THE APPLICANT ORGANISATION AND WAS PLACED IN THE WAITING ROOM FOR THIS ITEM OF BUSINESS.

Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Holt, proposed that the £1000 requested be awarded.
Agreed.

2021/0093 FINANCIAL MATTERS – INSURANCE MATTERS: None.

2021/0094 COVID 19 MATTERS: None.

2021/0095 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP UPDATE: Cllr. Tucker will become a member of the Planning Committee. The Town Clerk and Cllr. Mrs. Leat stressed the importance of members attending the Planning Committee as recent meetings had barely been quorate.

To accommodate any outcomes from the meeting to be held on 15th March, the review of membership of outside committees will be brought forward to the April meeting.

2021/0096 DRAFT RESPONSE TO LOCAL PLAN ISSUES AND OPTIONS

CONSULTATION: Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Tucker, proposed that this be adopted. Agreed.

2021/0097 REPORT ON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKING PARTY: Cllr. Sedgewick reported to Councillors on the deliberations of this group. In response to the report on the first meeting, Cllr. Holt said that there would be considerable overlap between what the work of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the group discussed in Town Forum which would look into the regeneration of the Town. He felt duplication of effort should be avoided. The second meeting of the working party had considered all the work required to refresh the existing draft. A specification for the consultant had been prepared and agreement reached on what could be done locally.

2021/0098 PROPOSAL ON WAY FORWARD WITH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN:

There being no further comments on the working party reports, Cllr. Sedgewick proposed that:

- a) the Town Council should go forward with the completion of the Neighbourhood Plan;
- b) a Steering Group be formed in conjunction with the Regeneration Committee;
- c) the Steering Group be funded through the identified Earmarked Funds, with the possibility that further funding may be needed from reserves;
- d) the Neighbourhood Plan be developed in tandem with the East Devon Local Plan using the same structure heading and the same time-scale;

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- e) consultation with the community undertaken;
- f) the previous consultant be engaged;
- g) the Steering Group should undertake some elements of the work.

Cllr. Walden seconded the proposal. Carried.

2021/0099 PROPOSED PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING ON NEIGHBOURHOOD

PLAN: Cllr. Sedgewick proposed that, in the light of the decisions of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Party and the representations made during Town Forum and in discussion of the Adaptation, Innovation and Resilience Funding, the evening allocated for the Annual Parish Meeting, which could not be held at this time, be used to seek views from the public on the future of Axminster. Cllr. Walden seconded the proposal. Carried.

2021/0100 APPROVAL OF OPERATIONS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE: Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Walden proposed that these be approved. Agreed.

2021/0101 APPROVAL OF PLANNING COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE: Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Leat, proposed that these be approved subject to the insertion of a statement that the quorum would be three. Agreed.

CLLR ADAMSON-DRAGE DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING THE SPOUSE OF AN EMPLOYEE AND WAS MOVED TO THE WAITING ROOM FOR THE FOLLOWING ITEMS.

2021/0102 APPROVAL OF EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE: Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Holt, proposed that these be approved. Agreed.

2021/0103 APPROVAL OF HOME WORKING POLICY: Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that these be approved. Agreed.

2021/0104 APPROVAL OF LONE WORKERS POLICY: Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Holt, proposed that this be approved. Agreed.

2021/0105 APPROVAL OF EMPLOYEE CODE OF CONDUCT: Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that this be approved. Agreed.

2021/0106 APPROVAL OF HOME WORKER SELF-ASSESSMENT PRO FORMA: Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that these be approved. Agreed.

CLLR ADAMSON-DRAGE WAS RE-ADMITTED FROM THE WAITING ROOM.

2021/0107 MATTERS AND ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 11TH JANUARY 2021: None.

2021/0108 MATTERS AND ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 8TH FEBRUARY 2021: The Town Mayor asked that the response from A.C.E.R. regarding the whereabouts of any unused grocery vouchers be ascertained.

2021/0109 RETENTION OF PROJECT MANAGER FOR FIRE DAMAGE TO MANAGE DAMAGE FROM DAMP INGRESS: following a report from the Town Clerk regarding the proposed appointment by the loss adjustor of a project manager to oversee the remedial work following the fire at the Arts Café, Cllr. Holt, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that the Town Council appoint and pay for the same manager

to oversee and co-ordinate the works to remedy water ingress in the same premises as the works would need to be undertaken simultaneously. Agreed.

2021/0110 MATTERS OF URGENCY: None.

2021/0111 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 15th FEBRUARY 2021: Cllr. Sedgewick, Chairman of the Committee, proposed, seconded by Cllr. Holt, that these be approved for accuracy. Agreed. Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed

2021/0112 MATTERS ARISING FROM ABOVE MEETING: None.

2021/0113 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND STRATEGY COMMITTEE HELD ON 22ND FEBRUARY 2021: Cllr. Sedgewick, Chairman of the Committee, proposed, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, that these be approved for accuracy. Agreed. Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed

2021/0114 MATTERS ARISING FROM ABOVE MEETING: None.

2021/0115 MINUTES OF THE PLANNING WORKING PARTY HELD ON 23RD FEBRUARY 2021: Cllr. Mrs. Leat, Chairman of the Planning Committee, proposed that these minutes be adopted for accuracy. Cllr. Doherty seconded the proposal. Agreed.

2021/0116 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OPERATIONS COMMITTEE HELD ON 1ST MARCH 2021: Cllr. Walden, Chairman of the Committee, proposed, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, that these be approved for accuracy. Agreed. Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2021/0117 MATTERS ARISING FROM ABOVE MEETING: Cllr. Walden reported that the works relating to the Netball project funded by the latest Section 106 works would come into use on 29th March 2021. The Town Clerk said that it was proposed that a site meeting be held with District Council officers regarding the skateboard park site.

2021/0118 PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES: These were deferred to the next meeting.

2021/0119 TRAINING FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RISK MANAGEMENT: there was prolonged discussion regarding whether what had been put forward by the trainer met what some Councillors felt was needed. Cllr. Sedgewick said that the auditors had raised the issue of the need for Risk Management training two years ago and there had not been much progress with that. Some Councillors had concerns regarding group session training as that runs the risk of items not being covered by all groups. The Deputy Clerk said she would ask the trainer to set out the entirety of the course. Cllr. Holt commended this course of action as he hoped it would clarify how the proposed training would take the Council along the route to where it wanted to go. Cllr. Holt suggested that Councillors should identify one big thing which is important to Council and residents and ask the trainer to work round that item. Cllr. Walden felt that the end of the process needed to equip Councillors with a tool kit which would stand them in good stead going forward. The Deputy Clerk said that the toolkit for doing that was the Risk Management Strategy.

Risk Analysis of reserves was suggested by the Deputy Clerk as a suitable topic and that would use an existing but key topic. Engagement was seen by many Councillors as an important topic.

Cllr. Holt said that it was important was to get training on how to extrapolate the skills gained in looking at a detailed exemplar to enable the Council to undertake broad level risk management across the full range of activities to achieve the delivery of a strategic plan for the community.

It was decided to defer any firm decision until after the public meeting on 15th March.

2021/0120 RESOLUTION OF EMAIL PROBLEMS: Following discussion, Cllr. Walden proposed that the Council should move to a new provider as soon as possible in order to have a more flexible and useful system as well as one that was more reliable. Cllr. Holt seconded the proposal. Carried.

2021/0121 CORRESPONDENCE:

- a. Various re COVID 19
- b. Healthwatch Voices
- c. North Devon Healthcare and Royal Devon and Exeter merger update.
- d. E.D.D.C. – various re Census.
- e. Love Devon.
- f. Anti-social behaviour and community safety officer – numerous.

The meeting ended at this point because of the lateness of the hour. An extra-ordinary meeting will be called for 16th March to deal with remaining matters.

Signature Date.....

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