

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL  
Held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2021 at 7.00 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall.

Present:

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

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

In attendance: Dist./Cty Cllr. I.L. Hall, Dist. Cllrs. S. Jackson and A.T. Moulding.

5 Members of the public. 0 representative of the Press.

2021/0218 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cllr. Mynard. Agreed.

2021/0219 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. DOHERTY DECLARED AN INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF THE LABOUR PARTY

CLLR. FARROW DECLARED AN INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF AXMINSTER TWINNING ASSOCIATION AND A GOVERNOR OF AXMINSTER COMMUNITY PRIMARY ACADEMY, A MEMBER OF THE LABOUR PARTY, THE NATIONAL TRUST AND THE CO-OP, A FRIEND OF FERNE ANIMAL SANCTUARY, A VOLUNTEER COLLECTOR FOR DEVON AIR AMBULANCE TRUST AND AS A JOINT TENANT OF A TOWN COUNCIL ALLOTMENT AT WOODBURY PARK ALLOTMENTS

CLLR. HOLT DECLARED AN INTEREST AS BEING LIAISON COUNCILLOR FOR ~~TOTALLY LOCALLY~~ AXMINSTER CHAMBER OF TRADE, TREASURER OF AXMINSTER HOSPITAL LEAGUE OF FRIENDS, A MEMBER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND THE NATIONAL TRUST.^ AND A TRUSTEE OF AXMINSTER HERITAGE CENTRE.

CLLR. LEAT DECLARED AN INTEREST AS BEING SECRETARY OF AXMINSTER DRAMA CLUB.

CLLR. SLEIGH DECLARED AN INTEREST AS BEING REGISTERED WITH SOCIAL WORK ENGLAND.

CLLR. SEDGEWICK DECLARED AN INTEREST AS BEING LIAISON COUNCILLOR ON AXE VALLEY LOCAL ACTION GROUP.

Approved 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021, Min 2021/0250

CLLR. TUCKER DECLARED AN INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF AXMINSTER NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP, LYME REGIS SEA SCHOOL, LYME REGIS SAILING CLUB, THE CO-OP, A TRUSTEE OF AXMINSTER SKATEPARK STEERING CHARITY, THE LABOUR PARTY, THE CO-OPERATIVE PARTY, THE GENERAL, MUNICIPAL AND BOILER MEN'S UNION, UNITE THE UNION, THE LEAGUE AGAINST CRUEL SPORTS AND UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON STUDENT'S UNION.

CLLR. SPURWAY DECLARED AN INTEREST AS A MANAGEMENT MEMBER OF CLOAKHAM LAWN SPORTS CLUB, A MEMBER OF CO-OP FOOD GROUP, AND OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS.

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, LIAISON COUNCILLOR WITH AXMINSTER JOB CLUB, A MEMBER OF THE LABOUR PARTY, COMMUNITY UNION, NATIONAL TRUST AND AS BEING SAFEGUARDING LEAD FOR AXMINSTER YOUTH CLUB.

2021/0220 TOWN FORUM – POST OF GUILDHALL MANAGER: The Chairman of the Guildhall Management Committee addressed Councillors regarding the Committee's wish to increase the hours for this post and wished to make Councillors aware of this because of the effect it would be likely to have on the level of support grant needed from the Town Council.

CLLR. FARROW, WHO DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING THE PARTNER OF THE GUILDHALL MANAGER, PROPOSED THAT AGENDA ITEM 5g BE BROUGHT FORWARD AND STANDING ORDERS SUSPENDED TO ENABLE THE GUILDHALL MANAGER TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DISCUSSIONS. CLLR. SEDGEWICK SECONDED THE PROPOSAL. AGREED

2021/0221 FINANCIAL MATTERS – GUILDHALL MANAGER: Questioned by Councillors regarding the potential for the Guildhall to be able to earn the revenue to cover the cost of increased salary commitments, the Chairman of the Committee said that this would be unlikely in the short term but was the long-term aim. It is intended that the new Manager would have skills in fund-raising and grant application and that there would be increased arts use of the venue. Cllr. Walden questioned whether an increase to 28 hours would be sufficient and said that the decision should be taken by the Guildhall Management Committee. He repeated his long-standing request that the Committee should prepare a precise and budgeted business plan. He felt there should be more money per hour and more hours. Cllr. Farrow stated that the Committee had decided on a small increase in hours at this time with an option to increase the hourly rate and the number of hours later on if justified. The Guildhall Management Committee Chairman said that she would like to press on with placing the advertisement as drafted and for the hours proposed. Cllr. Spurway cautioned against

forgetting the community role of the Guildhall. Cllr. Walden said that he had not but was keen that the organisation act with financial discipline.

Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Holt, proposed that the Guildhall Management Committee be authorised to place the advert as drafted and for the hours proposed. Agreed.

**CLLR. FARROW PROPOSED THAT STANDING ORDERS BE RE-INSTATED.  
AGREED.**

2021/0222 TOWN FORUM – SKATEPARK: Dist. Cllr. Hall thanked Cllr. Tucker for becoming a Trustee of the Skatepark. He hoped that the various interested parties could find a way to progress the project in such a way that maximum value could be obtained from the available funding.

2021/0223 TOWN FORUM – THE ARTS CAFÉ: A request was made for clear communications regarding the timelines involved in getting this ready to re-open. The Mayor replied that no answer to this could be given as a report from the contractor was awaited as problem with rising damp had been revealed as a result of the fire.

2021/0224 TOWN FORUM – RAYMONDS HILL PLAY PARK: A member of the public opposed this being foisted on residents against their will.

2021/0225 TOWN FORUM – RE-OPENING OF TOWN COUNCIL OFFICES: In response to a question the Mayor said that no date could be given as it would be determined by Government guidelines and the Town Council's duty of care to its staff. She said that it remained possible to contact the Council by email, letter or telephone.

2021/0226 SPONSORSHIP OF FLORAL DISPLAYS: A member of the public expressed vehement objection to the sponsorship signage at the Tesco roundabout as detracting from the floral display itself, among other things. The Council minutes had not recorded specific details. Councillors agreed to investigate this to see if the impact could be reduced in any way.

2021/0227 FINANCIAL MATTERS – APPROVAL OF APRIL PAYMENTS: Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr Walden, proposed that these be approved. Agreed.

2021/0228 FINANCIAL MATTERS – ANNUAL A.G.A.R. RETURN SECTION 1: The Responsible Financial Officer had prepared a revised report, reflecting comments received from Councillors, setting out the statements of assurance and the evidence available on which to support compliance or otherwise with each assertion. Despite the Responsible Financial Officer explaining that the narrative section was for Councillors' benefit and information and did not go to either the internal or external auditor, Councillors requested that various changes be made to reflect more positively on the work of Councillors and staff. Councillors then considered the individual assertions and the responses they felt appropriate. Councillors then considered the 8 assertions on Section 1. Duly proposed and seconded, assertions 1,2,3,4,6 and 8 were answered in the affirmative and assertions 5 and 7 in the negative.

2021/0229 FINANCIAL MATTERS – VIRING OF FUNDS FOR DECORATING: This had

been dealt with at the previous meeting.

2021/0230 REPORT FROM RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER: The Responsible Financial Officer said that she had been working on Section 2 of the Annual Return which was now with the Internal Auditor who would carry out random checks. She had completed the paperwork relating to the Electors Rights to View which would have to be displayed on 29<sup>th</sup> June to cover the stipulated period from 30<sup>th</sup> June to 2<sup>nd</sup> August.

2021/0231 FINANCIAL MATTERS – GRANT REQUEST FROM AXMINSTER JOB CLUB: Cllr. Walden said that the Club was now running again in a COVID-secure way. In response to a question, he said that in normal circumstances it offered help to between ten and fifteen people at its weekly sessions. He said that figures fluctuated according to levels of unemployment. Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Tucker, proposed that the grant of £2000 requested be approved. Agreed.

2021/0232 FINANCIAL MATTERS – DRAFT PROCUREMENT PROCEDURE: Councillors commended the Deputy Clerk’s work in preparing this document clarifying how expenditure should be agreed on shared/tenanted Town Council assets. Cllr. Holt asked that the words “by the Town Council” be inserted in clause 7 after the word advised. Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Tucker, proposed that the procedure be adopted. Agreed.

2021/0233 AXMINSTER SKATEPARK: Following the District Council having made it clear that they were not prepared to make land available at the former Millwey Rise football field, a meeting with officers from the District Council had been held at which two potential sites at Cloakham Lawn Sports Club were considered. This had established that the best option was to use the footprint of the previous, now demolished, skatepark.

The Town Councillors were very keen to see this project progressed to avoid losing the allocated Section 106 funding and to ensure most efficient use of that and any other funds. To that end the following resolutions were tabled by Cllr. Farrow for consideration and seconded by Cllr. Walden.

- a. Axminster Town Council (ATC) is fully supportive of the proposal for a new skatepark for the town proposed by Axminster Skatepark CIC (AS). This is evidenced by ATC's allocation of £150,000 from its section 106 funds to the project already. ATC is also aware that said monies need to be spent within the next 15 months to avoid being returned to the developer(s). **Agreed.**
- b. ATC believes that the best and most timely way of delivering the skatepark to Axminster is the following:
  - i That the skatepark should be sited on land owned by Cloakham Lawns Sports Centre, (CLSC) as per the original plans.
  - ii That said land be given on a long lease (say 99 years) to EDDC at a nominal rent and be leased back to AS also for a nominal rent.
  - iii That this would mean that the skatepark would be eligible for capital funding from EDDC and, if the project were to be delivered through the latter, any VAT

due would be reclaimable. It might also mean the project is considered to be permitted development and thus not require planning permission. **Agreed.**

- c. ATC resolves to pledge £50,000 to this project. As it will not be payable until 2022/3, the amounts to be drawn from reserves or added to our precept will be decided at our precept meeting in October.

Following concerns expressed by some Councillors regarding the sum specified, The Town Clerk suggested that it be reworded to read:

ATC resolves to pledge a substantial sum to this project. As it will not be payable until 2022/3, the amounts to be drawn from reserves or added to our precept will be decided at our precept meeting in October. **This was agreed.**

- d. This meeting further resolves to instruct the Town Clerk to advise EDDC and ATC's District Councillors of our decision and to request they make every effort to ensure that actions detailed in item 2 of this resolution be swiftly enacted. **Agreed.**

While discussing the various constituent resolutions above, Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that Standing Orders be suspended to allow Cty./Dist. Cllr. Hall to speak. Agreed. In response to a question, Cllr. Hall, who declared an interest as Chairman of Cloakham Lawn Sports Centre, said that the likely basic cost of the project would be £250,000 and there would be a need for closed circuit television on top of that for security reasons. Dist. Cllr. Moulding said that it was possible to split the installation of the two elements which would be an advantage in terms of funding availability and would allow other funding streams to be sourced. It had not been indicated whether the District Council would take on the lease yet.

Standing Orders were re-instated.

2021/0234 JUBILEE FIELD: no progress report had been received since the last meeting.

2021/0235 REVISED SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS: The Town Clerk said that she had revised the schedule approved at the last meeting to avoid the Finance and Strategy meeting and the Employment meeting being on consecutive nights. The revised schedule was approved.

2021/0236 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP REPORT: Cllr. Sedgewick said that there had been no meeting since the last report given to the Town Council.

2021/0237 REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS: As the Town Clerk had not seen an email from Cllr. Holt setting out some recommended changes, this item was deferred.

2021/0238 SECTION 106 MATTERS: The Town Clerk said that there had been some progress with the Raymonds Hill Play Area but requested that this be discussed in committee.

2021/0239 STAFF IDENTITY BADGES: Cllr. Sedgewick proposed that all staff should be provided with badges with a photograph and the name and position held. These could be of clip or lanyard type. The Town Crest should be included. Cllr. Holt seconded the proposal. Agreed.

2021/0240 DOCUMENT CONTROL: Cllr. Holt said that he had nothing to say as documents were now being presented with this in place.

2021/0241 UPDATING OF WEBSITE: Cllr. Sedgewick urged that documents be transferred to SharePoint with all speed. The Deputy Clerk said that would be a huge task and asked for a priority list, and it was agreed that Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, Policies and Procedures, Minutes from the last 6 months and minutes from the 6 months prior to that be the priority.

Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Sedgewick proposed that Standing Orders be suspended to allow Cllr. Hayward to speak. He recommended various websites which would assist with showing the priorities.

A Working Party comprising Cllrs. Holt, Walden, Tucker, Sedgewick and Farrow will meet to discuss the website. Dist. Cllr. Hayward asked to be involved too.

Standing Orders were re-instated.

2021/0242 CORRESPONDENCE.

- a. Various re COVID 19
- b. Healthwatch Voices
- c. Anti-social behaviour and community safety officer – numerous.

Cllr. Sedgewick 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. Farrow seconded the proposal. Carried.

2021/0243 STAFFING MATTERS: Cllr. Sedgewick informed members that the advertisement for the Cemetery Groundskeeper had been revised and would be actioned this week, with a closing date of 14<sup>th</sup> July and interviews set for 19<sup>th</sup> July.

2021/0244 RAYMONDS HILL PLAY AREA: Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Sleigh proposed that the Town Clerk should ask the landowners to prepare a lease for Council to consider and ask the planning consultant to draw up a planning application for submission. Agreed.

Signature ..... Date.....

ACTIONS	BY WHOM
Inform Guildhall Committee re decorating.	Town Clerk
Website Information re Arts Café	Deputy Clerk/RFO
Amend evidencing sections in A.G.A.R. background document.	Deputy Clerk/RFO
Notify grant request recipient.	Deputy Clerk/RFO
Make change in wording of Procurement Document.	Deputy Clerk/RFO
Email Dist. Cllrs. And E.D.D.C. officers re skatepark resolutions.	Town Clerk
Email revised meeting schedule to all Cllrs. And GHMC	Town Clerk
Organise staff badges.	Administrative Assistant
Transfer documents to SharePoint.	Administrative Assistant
Contact landowners re lease at Raymonds Hill	Town Clerk
Contact planning consultant regarding play area application.	Town Clerk