

AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

Held at 7.30 p.m. on Monday, 22nd June 2021 at Axminster Guildhall.

PRESENT: Cllrs. A.G. Sedgewick (Deputy Mayor, Chairman), J.J. Farrow (Mayor), S.P. Holt, M.D.G. Spurway and J.W. Walden.

The Town Clerk (Miss H. Kirkcaldie.)

0 Members of the Press 0 Members of the Public

1. APOLOGIES: Cllrs. C.A. Doherty, M. Mynard and the Deputy Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer, (Mrs. Z. Adamson-Drage).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

CLLRS. FARROW, 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.

CLLRS. FARROW, HOLT, SEDGEWICK AND WALDEN EACH DECLARED PERSONAL INTERESTS AS BEING MEMBERS OF AXMINSTER NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP.

CLLR. FARROW DECLARED A PERSONAL 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 A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING LIAISON COUNCILLOR FOR AXMINSTER CHAMBER OF TRADE, TREASURER OF AXMINSTER HOSPITAL LEAGUE OF FRIENDS, A TRUSTEE OF AXMINSTER HERITAGE CENTRE, A MEMBER OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY AND THE NATIONAL TRUST.

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

CLLR. SPURWAY DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING A MANAGEMENT MEMBER OF CLOAKHAM LAWN SPORTS CENTRE. A MEMBER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY AND A MEMBER OF THE CO-OP FOOD GROUP.

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.

3. PUBLIC FORUM: None.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS: None.

5. UPDATE ON ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS: The Town Clerk reported she was encouraging staff to use up outstanding leave rolled over from the previous year but that this was not always working out as had been intended.

6. COVID 19 SITUATION: The situation remained unchanged since the last meeting.

Approved 12th July 2021, 2021/0314

7. MATTERS OF URGENCY: None.

Cllr. Holt 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. Walden seconded the proposal. Agreed.

8. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES: None that would not be covered later on.

9. STAFFING MATTERS:

- a. COVID-19 and Return to Work Arrangements – the Town Clerk said that it would be possible for the Administrative Assistant to work from the reception offices in the mornings and for the Deputy Clerk to do so in the afternoons. Cllr. Farrow felt that there was no reason why there should not be public access to the offices immediately. The Town Clerk said that guidance at the moment was that staff should still be working from home. She will monitor guidance from the appropriate bodies.

Cllr. Farrow asked that the Operations Committee discuss the creation of a reception hatch in the foyer. Cllr. Holt had an idea of what might be possible and will pass this on for consideration by the Operations Committee. The Town Clerk pointed out that the foyer was used by various hirers of the Guildhall. Cllr. Sedgewick felt that any work should be done prior to the redecorating and recarpeting.

- b. Staff Training – Feedback and Implementation: The Town Clerk said that opportunities for staff discussions had been limited. Cllr. Sedgewick asked that she discuss this with all staff and report back. Cllr. Holt had offered to look at any additional training if the staff felt there had been any gaps.

The Town Clerk said that training had been arranged for Outdoor Staff in relation to inspection of playground equipment in readiness for the time at which the Town Council takes on responsibility for the Jubilee Field and she said that she would like to arrange a refresher strimming course for Lengthsman as well. She said that she had attended basic training from a national organisation in relation to various employment issues. In response to a question from Cllr. Sedgewick, she said it was usual for the staff to identify courses which it was felt would be beneficial and make arrangements without reference to the Employment Committee. Cllr. Sedgewick asked how allocation of training as between various staff was related to the training budget. Cllr. Farrow questioned whether training was necessarily beneficial if it took staff away from more pressing duties which was why she felt it should be authorised by the Employment Committee. The Town Clerk said that First Aid at work had been arranged for September.

- c. Update on Appraisals – all staff had been covered apart from the Deputy Clerk whose appraisal would be done in July.
- d. Staff Leave – the Town Clerk will pass on to the Chairman the figures relating to outstanding staff leave. Cllr. Walden said that failure of staff to take leave led to lack of staff efficiency. Cllr. Holt, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that a policy on staff leave be put in place. Agreed. Cllr. Holt offered to draw one up.
- e. Employee Handbook – it emerged in discussion that there was lack of clarity regarding the content Councillors wished to have in the Staff Handbook. Abridged policies were not considered desirable. It was felt that all employees should have access, preferably electronically, to the full policies. Cllr. Holt will speak to the Administrative Assistant to clarify what is needed. A physical binder with the policies will be made available in the office. Staff could be asked to sign a document to say that they have been given details as to where the information about Council policies could be found. Cllr. Sedgewick asked that a grid be drawn up to record information as to when this information has been passed to each member of staff.

- f. Flexible Working Policy – the Town Clerk said that her training course had indicated a policy which showed the definitions of the various forms of flexible working and she felt it would be useful to include these. Cllr. Farrow proposed that to avoid further delay the policy as presented by approved and any amendments dealt with at a later review. Cllr. Walden seconded the proposal. Carried.

- g. Contracted Hours, Annualised Hours, Additional Hours and Overtime Hours – the Town Clerk said there was a schedule for the outside staff setting out the daily hours worked throughout the year. The amount of overtime required would depend on circumstances and was not predictable. Cllr. Sedgewick requested a monthly report on the overtime worked by all members of staff and the purposes for which it was authorised for a 12-month period. Cllr. Farrow said that if staff were regularly doing substantial overtime, then their contracted hours needed to be reviewed. Cllr. Holt agreed but said that there needed to be data to back up such a discussion. Cllr. Walden said that if staff hours were increased then the budgetary implications need to be put in place. Cllr. Sedgewick proposed that a monthly report on overtime be prepared for all staff. Cllr. Farrow seconded the report. Agreed. The Town Clerk drew to the attention of members the views of the Administrative Assistant that the finalised policies might be worth having the policies scrutinised by employments specialists. Cllr. Walden said he agreed with that view. Other Councillors disagreed. Cllr. Farrow felt that the important thing was to get them published and put to bed. Cllr. Sedgewick felt that any alterations needed could be picked up on review. Cllr. Farrow seconded Cllr. Sedgewick’s suggestion. Carried.

- h. Administrative Assistant Job Description and Contract – Cllr. Sedgewick said that these needed to reflect the current hours and duties being undertaken, as these had changed since the initial appointment. Cllr. Holt, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that the documents as placed on the Members’ Area be approved. Agreed.

Signed Date