

AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

Held at 7.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 20th July 2021 at Axminster Guildhall.

PRESENT: Cllrs. A.G. Sedgewick (Deputy Mayor, Chairman), C.A. Doherty, 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. M. Mynard and the Deputy Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer, (Mrs. Z. Adamson-Drage.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

CLLRS. DOHERTY, 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.

CLLR. DOHERTY DECLARED AN INTEREST AS A MEMBER OF THE LABOUR PARTY.

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. ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMAN: Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Doherty, proposed Cllr. Holt as Vice-chairman. There were no other nominations and he was duly elected.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

- a) Staff Training Records – this had not been undertaken and will be carried forward.
- b) Authorisation of Staff Training – on agenda.
- c) Outstanding Leave Usage Plan – on agenda
- d) Staff Receipt of Policy Information Grid – still to be done.
- e) Annualised Hours Allocation for Outdoor Staff – on agenda
- f) A.C.A.S definitions – not done.
- g) Whistleblowing – on agenda
- h) Reception Office Area Plans – still in draft form
- i) Staff Feedback on Training – still to be done.
- j) Website Information on Job Descriptions – still to be updated.

The Town Clerk said that she would endeavour to get these matters covered and emailed to Councillors by the end of the following week.

Cllr. Sedgewick asked about progress regarding identity badges. The Town Clerk said that the Administrative Assistant had been working on this but had been taking leave.

6. COVID 19 SITUATION: Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Sedgewick, proposed that this be dealt with under item 9a. Agreed.

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. Sedgewick seconded the proposal. Agreed.

CLLR. WALDEN ARRIVED AT THIS POINT

8. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES: Nothing was raised.

9. STAFFING MATTERS:

- a. COVID-19 and Return to Work Arrangements – The Town Clerk outlined alterations to the existing arrangements which would ensure that as far as possible Town Council activities were undertaken with a degree of separation from those of the Guildhall Management Committee operations in order to meet the Town Council's duty of care as an employer. Cllr. Farrow questioned the need for this. Cllr. Holt pointed out that such precautions were being applied by other organisations such as supermarkets, the surgery and Axminster Heritage.
- b. Carried Forward Staff Leave – the Town Clerk gave a report on usage of leave carried forward from the prior year. Cllr. Sedgewick said that staff had to ensure that all leave must be taken by 31st December this year.

CLLR. SEDGEWICK PROPOSED THAT AGENDA ITEM 9i BE BROUGHT FORWARD. AGREED.

- c. Arrangements for covering staff changes/absence – the Town Clerk stated that there is no loss of public access when members of staff are on leave and said that any urgent matters would be covered by those staff not on leave.
- d. Staff Leave – the Town Clerk will pass on to the Chairman the figures relating to outstanding staff
- e. Employee Handbook – Cllr. Holt will liaise with the Administrative Assistant regarding the format

of this manual to clarify what is required.

- f. Contracted Hours, Annualised Hours, Additional Hours and Overtime Hours – the Town Clerk said that she had not had time to look into that.
- g. Administrative Assistant Job Description and Contract – Cllr. Holt undertook to review the wording of the clauses which were in question, that this be agreed by email ready for submission to the full Town Council. Agreed.
- h. Monthly Overtime Report – the Town Clerk reported that the office staff incur overtime when they attend any meetings outside the normal office hours. She said there was no “typical” pattern to overtime. The duties of the Cemetery Caretaker had been covered mainly by the Handyman, though some of his own works may have been put back as a result.
- i. Annual Leave Policy – Cllr. Holt had drafted a policy using a standard template, including a leave of absence request form. A change in policy was that 3 days could be carried over from one year to the next but would have to be used in the first 3 months of the following year. Further minor amendments were flagged up and Cllr. Holt undertook to make appropriate adjustments and circulate the revised document in readiness for approval at the August Town Council meeting.
- j. Whistleblowing Policy – Some minor alterations to numbering of paragraphs were made and also an alteration to paragraph the course of actions by which matters relating to Councillors be referred to the monitoring officer.
- k. Staff absence Patterns – the Town Clerk gave a report on staff absences during the past seven months. She will report again at the next meeting.
- l. Arrangements for Covering Staff Changes/Absences – Cllr. Farrow asked what arrangements could be put in place to deal with the weed infestation on the cobbles outside the Arts Café pending the appointment of the new Cemetery Groundskeeper. The Town Clerk said that the lack of footfall contributed to this problem. The best option, given the delicate nature of the cobbles, would be to spray the weeds. Cllr. Walden offered the use of a flame gun. The Town Clerk will place this on the next agenda for the Operations Committee
- m. Update on Appointment of Cemetery Groundskeeper –following the failure of the initial round of advertising, the interview panel was due to meet to meet the following day with a view to short-listing from the second round of applications for interview on the Friday.
- n. Request for Flexible Working - a request from a member of staff to work flexibly on a temporary basis in late July and in August was considered and approved.

Signed Date

ACTION	BY WHOM
By end of following week to carry out overdue items from previous meeting.	Town Clerk
Provide details of outstanding staff leave	Town Clerk
Liaise with Admin. Asst. re staff handbook	Cllr. Holt
Make minor changes in wording of Admin. Asst. job description and contract.	Cllr. Holt.
Make minor changes in Annual Leave Policy	Cllr. Holt.
Put works on Old Courthouse Garden on next Ops Agenda	Town Clerk