

AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE

Held at 7.30 p.m. on Tuesday, 17th August 2021 at Axminster Guildhall.

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

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

0 Members of the Press 0 Members of the Public

2. APOLOGIES: Cllrs. S.P. Holt (Vice-chairman) and M. Mynard.

3. 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, AND SEDGEWICK 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. SEDGEWICK DECLARED AN INTEREST AS BEING LIAISON COUNCILLOR ON AXE VALLEY LOCAL ACTION GROUP.

CLLR. SPURWAY DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST 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.

4. PUBLIC FORUM: None.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS:

a) Old Courthouse Garden – this had been placed on the agenda of the Strategy and Finance Meeting.

6. COVID 19 SITUATION: No matters to raise.

7. MATTERS OF URGENCY: None.

Cllr. Farrow 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. Spurway seconded the proposal. Agreed.

CLLR. WALDEN ARRIVED AT THIS POINT

8. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES: None that would not be covered as agenda items.

9. STAFFING MATTERS:

- a. COVID-19– there were no new arrangements required.
- b. Cemetery Groundskeeper Options Report – the Deputy Town Clerk had prepared a report on options which might be pursued considering the lack of a Cemetery Groundskeeper. She mentioned the general problems caused by lack of available workers. Continued use of contractors on a long term basis was one option and to offer either the Lengthsman or the Handyman and additional seven hours per week to cover cemetery duties, which they might not be prepared to do. Option two would be to use a contractor but to employ a gardener for 17.5 hours per week to cover day to day jobs and enable the other staff to cover Cemetery duties.

Following further discussion, Cllr. Sedgewick proposed that Option 1 be adopted, with grass cutting being contracted out and both existing outdoor staff being offered an additional 7 hours a week for a six month period to undertake all tasks required at the cemetery and all other sites. Cllr. Walden seconded the proposal. Carried. If either or both existing staff accepted the offer then there would have to be a contract variation. It was agreed that it would be prudent to retain the present contractors on the existing basis to enable their services would be available if needed the following spring or to allow a smooth transition following any training of a recruit. The post will be advertised in the nub news and on the job site in four month's time.

- c. Revisions to Inductions Check List – Cllr Sedgewick said that in the light of the rapid resignation of the newly recruited Groundskeeper, she felt it prudent to revise the induction checklist. She outlined the changes made and said that they incorporated points from the original list and some from the A.C.A.S. model.

Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that the revised checklist, as further revised be approved. Agreed.

- d. Request from Deputy Town Clerk to Undertake C.I.L.C.A. Training – the Deputy Town Clerk was asked to leave the chamber for this duration of this item.
- e. The Town Clerk said that the Deputy Town Clerk had raised the matter during her appraisal. She outlined the benefits in terms of the up skilling of the staff and but there would be an impact in terms of the cost of funding the training and the loss of working hours to allow to undertake the training.
- f. Cllr. Walden was supportive of the request. The Town Clerk said that it would be possible to spread the work across several months which would allow it to be managed in the context of the Deputy Clerk's workload. Cllr. Sedgewick said that there was a heavy Council workload and including the Risk Management Work, the Strategic Planning. She also expressed concerns that a return of investment clause be required should the person in whom the investment has been made moves on within a specified time. Cllr. Farrow felt that such a clause should not be longer than a year. She proposed that it be supported on the basis that when there is time-critical work for the Town Council the Deputy Clerk carry out the study in her own time. Cllr. Sedgewick proposed that the application be supported. Cllr. Walden seconded the proposal. Agreed.
The Deputy Clerk returned to the chamber.
- g. Staff Leave – the Town Clerk reported on the leave available to the end of the year. Cllr. Sedgewick expressed concern regarding the amount of leave still to be taken. She said that no financial compensation would be available. She was concerned about the impact this would have on the

Council's work.

- h. Staff Handbook– Cllr. Holt, in a written report said that a draft will be available in readiness for the September meeting of the Town Council. Cllr. Farrow asked for a reassurance that the document would be electronically transmissible.
- i. Contracted Hours, Annualised Hours, Additional Hours and Overtime Hours – the Town Clerk said that she had struggled to find ACAS definitions for many of these terms. She read out a definition of annualised hours that had been written by a legal firm. The Deputy Clerk said that there is less need for the Handyman to work on an annualised basis now that much of his seasonal work is covered by the Lengthsman. Cllr. Farrow felt there should be more flexibility of job roles across the outdoor staff.
- j. Monthly Overtime Report – the Town Clerk said that there was no overtime to report for out door staff. For Office Staff it was attendance at evening meetings. A written monthly report was requested.
- k. Reception Office Plan – Cllr. Walden questioned the presence of this item on the agenda as it had been decided to retain the status quo by the Operations Committee.
- l. Staff absence Patterns – there had been no staff sickness absence
- m. Staff Training Report, Requests and Authorisation – the Town Clerk gave details of forthcoming training arrangements for strimming, and playground safety training. On line display screen equipment training had also been sourced at no cost.
- n. Website Updates –the Deputy Clerk has been asked to update some of the reference documents. It is hoped that the Administrative Assistant will take over once she has had training. Staff and Councillors need training in Teams and Office 365. Cllr. Leat will be asked to provide a demonstration possibly on a planning meeting evening.
- o. Overtime Policy – Cllr. Holt had submitted a written report. The Deputy Clerk said consideration of the policy was premature in view of the regular commitment to additional hours as the policy gives these hours as optional, which could leave evening meetings unclerked. She said that if staff had an option to take time off in lieu this would reduce the normal working hours. Cllr. Farrow said that what was important that overtime is properly authorised in advance. A twelve month picture is needed. Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that the matter be deferred to the next meeting.
- p. Matters of Urgency - none.

Signed Date

ACTIONS LIST

ACTION
Letter to staff member re training
Paper on staff leave
Record discussions on staff leave
Monthly report on overtime
Monthly report on staff sickness absence
Monthly report on training
Annual report on attendance at meetings.