

**AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF A VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE FINANCE AND STRATEGY COMMITTEE HELD AT 7.00 p.m.  
ON MONDAY, 22<sup>nd</sup> FEBRUARY 2021.**

1. **PRESENT:** Cllr. J.J. Farrow, (Mayor), Cllr. A.G. Sedgewick, (Deputy Mayor {Chairing the meeting on behalf of the Mayor}), Cllr. S.P. Holt, Cllr. Mrs. S.L.N. Leat, Cllr. M.D.G. Spurway, the Town Clerk, and the Administrative Assistant.

1 Member of the public, 0 representative of the press.

2. **APOLOGIES:** The Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

CLLRS. FARROW, LEAT, SEDGEWICK AND SPURWAY EACH DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST 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. WALDEN DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF AXMINSTER COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE.

CLLR. WALDEN DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING 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.

CLLR. HOLT DECLARED AN INTEREST AS TREASURER TO AXMINSTER HOSPITAL LEAGUE OF FRIENDS.

4. **ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 25<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2021:** Ongoing matters related to the defective footbridge on the informal path linking Foxhill playing field with Footpath 69; liaison with the loss adjustor regarding items identified as damaged beyond repair following the fire; expressions of interest in the accommodation previously occupied by the Senior Citizens' Centre. The Town Clerk updated Members on the progress by the clean-up company and said she was awaiting the response to various issues she had raised. She said that she was seeking further detail regarding Cemetery Chapel quotes. Cllr. Holt asked how it was intended to take forward the items listed as Council's ambitions for the next 5 years. Cllr. Sedgewick said that the Town Clerk and the Responsible Financial Officer were arranging a training programme on Strategic Planning and Risk Management with a trainer. The details of this are awaited. No decision will be made until the proposed course outline is received.

5. **PUBLIC FORUM:** No matters were raised.

6. **COVID 19 RELATED ADJUSTMENTS:** no matters were raised.

7. **FINANCIAL MATTERS**

a) **To Discuss Possible Options for Old Courthouse** – Councillors felt that they required further information particularly in terms of the tenancies before any further discussion could take place, as well as the works required to make the building accessible and the costs of moving the Council Offices from the Guildhall to the Old Courthouse. Cllr. Farrow asked why the loan taken out at 6% interest had not been paid off rather than getting a much smaller rate of interest from invested funds. Cllr. Walden said that the amount owed would be the same whether it was paid now or later. He asked that the matter be discussed at the next meeting of the committee.

b) **Storage of Larger Assets** – Cllr. Spurway, seconded by Cllr. Holt, proposed that an expression of interest without commitment be lodged in respect of some industrial units planning permission for which was being considered at present, with a view to possible to use for storage of equipment.

c) **Measured Buildings Surveys** – Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that it would be premature to pursue this matter further until the Strategic Plan was in place.

8. PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS – THE GUILDHALL: The Administrative Assistant was sourcing contractors to deal with the guttering problems as the height was greater than that at which Town Council staff were trained to operate.

9. PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS - OLD COURTHOUSE: the loss adjusters will be asked to manage the works to be done following the initial clean-up which is nearing completion.

12. MATTERS OF URGENCY: None.

Cllr. Walden 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. Holt seconded the proposal. Agreed.

14. QUOTES FOR PROPOSED WORKS – VEHICLE INSURANCE: Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Leat proposed that the quote of £521.55 provided by the Insurance Broker, be accepted. Agreed.

15. TENANCY MATTERS:

a) Old Courthouse - a letter from one of the tenants had been received requesting a rent rebate reflecting the impact of COVID 19 on their business. Cllr. Holt, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, proposed that this be made, commensurate with the same percentage level of rebate afforded to other tenants who had made similar requests. Agreed. Legal advice will be sought regarding other matters raised in the letter.

Signed ..... Date .....