

AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE STRATEGY AND COMMITTEE
Held at 7.00 p.m. on Monday, 10th May 2021 at Axminster Guildhall.

1. **PRESENT:** Cllr. J.J. Farrow, (Mayor), Cllr. A.G. Sedgewick, (Deputy Mayor), Cllr. S.P. Holt, Cllr. M.D.G. Spurway, the Town Clerk, the Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer.
0 Member of the public, 0 representative of the press.

2. **APOLOGIES:** Cllr. Mrs. S.L.N. Leat, and Cllr. Mynard.

3. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:**

CLLRS. FARROW, 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, 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 29TH MARCH 2021:** Nothing raised.
PUBLIC FORUM: Cllr. Walden expressed concern that the Guildhall Accounts were not to be on the agenda for the Annual Parish meeting. He was advised that although it had been custom and practice that the Guildhall Management Committee Annual General Meeting had been done as part of the Annual Parish Meeting, unlike the Annual Parish meeting, there was no statutory requirement as to the time of year at which that meeting be held. The business of the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the Town Council were being curtailed to enable them to take place on the same night in the short time scale permitted following the expiry of the COVID regulations. The accounts will be circulated to all members. Cllr. Holt said that it should have its own separate annual general meeting anyway.

5. **COVID 19 RELATED ADJUSTMENTS:** The Deputy Town Clerk said that meetings with a large attendance from the public would pose problems. It was felt that staff and Councillors should be encouraged to take flow tests making use of the facilities in the West Street car park.

6. **FINANCIAL MATTERS- RESPONSE TO INSURANCE ENQUIRY:** The Town Clerk said that the insurers had declined to advise a lower limit to be set on the public liability insurance carried by contractors on the grounds that it would depend on the work being done. Enquiries will be made as to whether other Councils do this.

7. **DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE:** Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Sedgewick proposed that the draft terms of reference be approved. Agreed.

8. **RISK MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC PLANNING TRAINING:** Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Holt, proposed that this be discussed in Committee. Agreed.

9. **CHANGE IN REMIT OF COMMITTEE:** Following discussion, Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that maintenance and repair of Town Council buildings be transferred to the Operations Committee. Agreed.

10. **ACQUISITION OF EQUIPMENT TO IMPROVE PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY TO MEETINGS:** Following discussion, Cllr. Holt, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that the office staff investigate what equipment might be needed to enable live-streaming of meetings and projection of documents to improve public accessibility to

meetings. Agreed. Enquiries will be made of neighbouring Town Councils and there will be liaison with the Guildhall Management Committee. Grant sources will be investigated.

11. PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS – THE GUILDHALL: Routine items, such as removal/replacement of water tanks is on-going. There have been delays caused by shortage of available contractors and materials.

12. Cllr. Holt asked who was responsible for redecoration of the Guildhall. Cllr. Farrow said that quotes had been obtained via the Administrative Assistant, but work was not likely until the Autumn. The Structural Surveyor's report on the stanchions indicated that one was in very poor condition and a re-sect would be needed. The stanchion from which the defective render had been removed was in sound condition. The recommended paint had had been ordered but was subject to availability. The Town Clerk advised that it may be necessary to extend the scaffold hire for that reason and recommended that that be done. The problem remains of the gap between the soffits and the top of the blockwork which allowing access on occasions to birds and bees. Where access had been possible this gap has been stopped but a more comprehensive exercise is needed which will require scaffolding or an access platform of some kind.

13. PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS - OLD COURTHOUSE: the loss adjustor and his contractor had made a site meeting to look at the problems and a report was awaited after Easter.

14. MATTERS OF URGENCY - NEWSLETTER: A quote had been received to send out the newsletter to individual households. Cllr. Farrow proposed that this quote be refused as being not best use of ratepayer's money. Cllr. Walden seconded the motion. Agreed. Cllr. Farrow proposed that it be published online and 500 be printed on forestry commission certified paper in line with the Town Council's environmental credentials and placed on notice boards, selected shops and made available on request from the Town Council offices and via social media and on the website. Cllr. Walden seconded the proposal. Agreed. Thanks were expressed to Cllr. Sedgewick for all the hard work she had undertaken.

15. MATTER OF URGENCY – TOWN SAFETY: following reports of the assault and abuse of a care worker returning home, Cllr. Sedgewick suggested that it may be worthwhile looking into extending the coverage of close circuit television in the town centre. Cllr. Walden said that public support should be shown, and the action condemned wherever it occurs. Education to change attitudes was important. Cllr. Walden felt that it was appropriate for the Town Mayor to prepare a statement to be put on the website summarising the views expressed by members. The Town Clerk added that it be sent to the press as well. Cllr. Holt endorsed these sentiments.

16. MATTER OF URGENCY – COMMUNITY ISSUES: Cllr. Sedgewick said that there were strong views on social media regarding the skatepark and town signage. These will be put on the next appropriate agenda. The Deputy Clerk said that the Jubilee Field was another such issue. Cllr. Holt said this highlighted the need for the Town Council to improve its communications with the public.

17. UPDATE ON OFFICE 365: The Deputy Town Clerk gave an update on this process. The revised completion date is 28th May.

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. Holt seconded the proposal. Agreed.

18. RISK MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC PLANNING TRAINING: Following discussion, Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Holt, proposed that the contract be terminated "without prejudice" on the grounds that the trainer had not provided or offered what was wanted. Agreed.

The Deputy Clerk asked what members wished to do in respect of completing section 1 on the Annual Return. She outlined the background to Council attempts to secure the required training. In response to a question from Cllr. Sedgewick, she said that the External Auditors will not give advice but last year had taken account of the Council's action plan. Cllrs. Holt and Sedgewick will arrange a meeting with the Deputy Clerk.

Regarding various matters relating to Risk and Health and Safety she recommended getting in a specialist firm to do an audit.

Cllr. Holt felt the matter was being made over complicated. After further discussion, it was agreed that he and Cllr. Sedgewick would work to deliver a one-day training course on Understanding Risk. The Deputy Clerk would send them any relevant information she has.

19.QUOTES FOR PROPOSED WORKS – QUOTES FOR A COMPREHENSIVE CONDITION SURVEY: The Town Clerk said that she had been unable to get a response from one of the contractors she had contacted. Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Holt proposed that the quote from the one who had responded, of £300.00, exclusive of Value Added Tax, for the Guildhall be accepted. Agreed.

There are areas in the Old Courthouse where water ingress is taking place. The Town Clerk said that a comprehensive building survey is needed for this site also to identify issues which may become much more expensive to deal with later. Cllr. Holt, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that a comprehensive condition survey for this building be obtained too. Agreed.

20. TENANCY MATTERS:

a) Old Courthouse - letters had been received expressing interest in the Senior Citizens Centre. The Tenants of the Arts Café had indicated that it would not be viable for them to use it as a pop-up café.

Cllr. Walden said that the Town Council was the custodian of what was a significant heritage asset in the town. He said that when the view had been aired previously that the building should be sold because of the cost of its upkeep but public representations had indicated that many were against this. He felt that the matter may need to be rediscussed but in the short term it should be let out.

The Deputy Clerk said that the Senior Citizens', Centre was the most lettable area. The building needed significant investment to make it lettable but there were options. She felt the fact that it was unoccupied was detrimental to the health of the building. One of the offers was for community use, one was for commercial use both these proposals were for full time use. The third offer was just for a small group hire on an occasional basis. Both will be advised of the rate and asked if they are still interested. Cllr. Holt proposed that initial letters be sent to the two who have expressed an interest.

Signed Date

Find out about limits specified for contractors' liability	Administrative Assistant
Redraft Terms of Reference to show loss of buildings.	Town Clerk
Look into equipment for live-streaming and document projection	Admin Asst/Town Clerk
Circulate GHMC mins to non-GHMC cllrs.	Administrative Assistant
Skatepark and signage to go on next appropriate agenda.	Town Clerk
advert for spaces in och	Town Clerk/Admin Asst.
advise applicants of costs.	Town Clerk
site visit to Bridport building	Admin Asst/Town Clerk
site meeting to och after 21st June.	Town Clerk
circulate document on lease valuation.	Town Clerk