

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 7.00 p.m.  
Under Regulation 78 of the Coronavirus Act 2020

Present:

Town Mayor                    Cllr. Ms. J.J. Farrow  
Deputy Town Mayor: Cllr. Mrs. A. G. Sedgewick,  
Councillors:                C.A. Doherty, S.P. Holt, Mrs. S.L.N. Leat, S. Sleigh,  
   M.D.G. Spurway, O.S. Tucker and J.W. Walden (for part of meeting).

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

In attendance: Dist. Cllr. Jackson

4 Members of the public. 0 representative of the Press.

2021/0143 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Cllrs. M. Mynard and the Administrative  
Assistant (Mrs. S. Gay).

2021/0144 MEMBERS NOT PRESENT: None.

2021/0145 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: CLLRS. DOHERTY, FARROW, MRS.  
LEAT, 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. 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. TUCKER DECLARED AN INTEREST IN RESPECT OF AGENDA ITEM 14, THE  
PROPOSED JUNIOR PARK RUN, AS BEING A PERSONAL FRIEND AND  
PART-TIME WORK COLLEAGUE OF THE MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC WHO  
HAD CONTACTED THE TOWN COUNCIL REGARDING THIS ITEM. HE  
STATED ALSO THAT, AS A CANDIDATE FOR THE COUNTY COUNCIL  
ELECTION HE WAS SUBJECT TO THE RULES OF PURDAH. THE TOWN  
COUNCIL BEING A NON-PARTY POLITICAL BODY NO OBJECTIONS WERE  
RAISED TO HIS PRESENCE AT THE MEETING.

CLLR. WALDEN DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF  
AXMINSTER COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE.

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 AND AS BEING SAFEGUARDING LEAD FOR AXMINSTER

Approved 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021, Min 2021/0248

## YOUTH CLUB.

2021/0146 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 16<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021: It was pointed out that in minute 2021/0140 the cost of the planning application should read £81.55, not £81.555.

Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Sedgewick, proposed that, subject to that correction, these minutes be approved for accuracy. Agreed.

Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Leat, proposed that they be adopted as policy. Agreed.

2021/0147 NOTES FROM PUBLIC MEETING: Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Tucker, proposed that these be deferred to the next meeting. Agreed.

2021/0148 TOWN FORUM – REMOVAL OF ASBESTOS AT ALLOTMENTS: A tenant expressed appreciation for the work of the Administrative Assistant in co-ordinating this project.

2021/00149 TOWN FORUM – PROPOSED JUNIOR PARK RUN: Two members of the public said that they were trying to establish a Junior Park Run in Axminster along Footpath 79, The Stoplevel Way.

Cllr. Farrow proposed that this agenda item be brought forward for discussion. Agreed.

2021/ 0150 PROPOSED JUNIOR PARK RUN: Cllr. Leat welcomed the proposal to organise this event on a weekly basis. Cllr. Holt asked for plenty of advance publicity prior to the first event so that path users were aware of its occurrence. Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Leat, proposed that this be supported. Agreed.

2021/00151 TOWN FORUM – PROPOSED PICNIC BENCHES ON THE MINSTER GREEN: Dist. Cllr. Jackson, speaking on behalf of the non-constituted body Action in Axminster, referred to a wish to replicate the placing of picnic benches on the Minster Green and asked that any grant application be submitted by the Town Council on the groups behalf and agreed to the benches then becoming assets of the Town Council.

It was agreed that agenda item 7f be brought forward for discussion at this point.

2021/0152 REQUEST FOR FUNDING FOR PICNIC TABLES ON MINSTER GREEN: Following lengthy discussion, Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Doherty, proposed that this matter be deferred until a clearer proposal had been received from Action in Axminster. Agreed.

2021/00153 TOWN FORUM – OLD COURTHOUSE GARDEN: A member of the public asked for an additional bench in the green area of the public garden. The Deputy Clerk said that one may become available shortly.

2021/00154 TOWN FORUM – CLOSURE OF LYME STREET: A member of the public said that the advance information boards which should have been out in advance had not been in evidence. He deplored the lack of communication higher authorities regarding such things. Another member of the public said that a bus company had said that they had not been informed either. The Town Clerk was asked to write on

behalf of the public to complain.

2021/0155 FINANCIAL MATTERS – APPROVAL OF MARCH PAYMENTS: Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Leat, proposed that these be approved. Agreed.

2021/0156 FINANCIAL MATTERS – REPORT FROM RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER: Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that this written report be noted. Agreed.

2021/0157 FINANCIAL MATTERS – INSURANCE: there was nothing to report.

2021/0158 FINANCIAL MATTERS – QUARTERLY REPORT AGAINST BUDGET:  
Elaborating on her written report, the Deputy Clerk said that the Old Courthouse expenditure was significantly over budget, partly as a result of the external decorating and partly as a result of the occurrence of the five-yearly electrical safety inspection. All other areas were under budget because of the effects of COVID-19.

Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, proposed that the report be adopted. Agreed.

2021/0159 FINANCIAL MATTERS – FUNDING REQUEST FROM ROYAL BRITISH LEGION: The Town Mayor said that this related to events being staged to mark the centenary of the erection of the War Memorial. Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that funding up to a level of £1000 be made available. Agreed.  
The Deputy Clerk asked that a formal small grant application be made. A letter will be sent to the Secretary of the local branch asking that this be done.

2021/0160 UPDATING OF COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS: Cllr. Sedgewick, lead of the Group, advised that the membership of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group comprised: -Town Councillors Farrow, Holt, Tucker, Walden; District Councillors Jackson and Hayward, County Councillor Hall, Ms. C. Furse, Mr. B. Hedges and Mr. D. Knapman.

2021/0161 OPTIONS FOR HOLDING OF MEETINGS FOLLOWING 6<sup>TH</sup> OF MAY:  
Advice had been received from various sources regarding the timing of the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the Town Council, suggesting that Councils may prefer to hold these either before 7<sup>th</sup> May or after 17<sup>th</sup> May, when regulations become more relaxed. Following discussion, Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Holt, proposed that the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Meeting of the Town Council both be held on 24<sup>th</sup> May, the Finance and Strategy Meeting be held on 10<sup>th</sup> May and the Employment Meeting be held on 17<sup>th</sup> May. The final virtual meeting will be that of the Operations Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> May. Agreed.

2021/0162 APPROVAL OF ANNUAL ACCOUNTS: The Deputy Clerk said that she would like to place approval of Section 1 on the May Agenda and of Section 2 in June. There would be an option to call an extra-ordinary meeting of the Town Council at the end of June to meet the deadlines if necessary.

2021/0163 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP REPORT: Cllr. Sedgewick said the meeting had discussed plan content (among which are health and wellbeing,

education, environment, industry and retail, leisure and culture, traffic and infrastructure, housing and general services) and its vision and purpose. The focus will be on policies for land use in the parish for the future. Use will be made of the work done previously and the steering group benefits from having among its number a very experienced planning professional.

2021/0164 AGENDA FOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING: this had been covered in earlier discussions.

2021/0165 PLACING OF PUBLIC SEATS: Councillors agreed that Standing Orders be suspended to allow a member of the public to speak. The member of the public requested that additional benches be provided in the area of the garden which is not licensed to the café operators. Cllr. Leat questioned whether there was room for this.

Cllr. Holt proposed that a site visit be made by a member of staff to look into where the existing benches are and whether there was suitable space for another. Agreed. Reports of items having been deposited on one of the tables will be investigated at the same time.

Standing Orders were re-instated.

Cllr. Walden said that permission had been sought, and received, from the District Council. to place a bench in the alcove on Chard Road in front of First Avenue, which had been occupied formerly by a bus shelter. In fact, the District Council installed one there itself. A letter of complaint had been received from a local resident, which had been passed on to the District Council which had responded that it was prepared to move the seat to a nearby location in place of an older seat there. The Operations Committee had taken the view that if the provision of amenities was based on objections to the antisocial behaviour these can attract then there would be no provision at all in the town and that it was up to the forces of law and order to manage such issues should they arise. The Town Clerk advised that it could expose the Town Council to ridicule should it place a seat in that location following the response of the District Council to the complainant.

Cllr. Walden said he disagreed and proposed that one of the seats from the Town Centre be moved to that location. Cllr. Tucker seconded the proposal. Agreed.

Cllr. Walden said that he thought the bench outside the former Methodist Church had been repaired by the new owner of the property. A member of staff will look into this.

Regarding the bench in honour of former Cllr. Mrs. Spiller, the Town Clerk said that she had been in discussion with her regarding the risks to potential users of the bench associated with her original choice of location and was waiting for her response to the alternative suggestions which she had put forward.

2021/0166 STRUCTURAL SURVEYOR'S REPORT ON THE GUILDHALL

STANCHIONS: The surveyor had been satisfied with the condition of the stanchion which had been exposed following the removal of the defective rendering. He had made recommendations as to suitable treatment for all the stanchions, including the one stanchion with serious defects for which the remedial action required would be

removal and replacement of the defective lower part. It is hoped that it will be possible to get the contractor to do the required work while the scaffolding is still in place.

Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that sufficient of the paint recommended by the Structural Engineer be purchased to treat the stanchion in question. Agreed.

Cllr. Walden raised the issue of the condition of the levelling pads on which the feet of the fire escape adjacent to the most defective stanchion stand. Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Walden proposed that this be investigated, and corrective action taken before the Guildhall re-opens. Agreed.

2021/0167 RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION POLICY: Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that this be adopted. Agreed.

2021/0168 INDUCTION POLICY: Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Holt, proposed that this be adopted. Agreed.

2021/0169 INDUCTION CHECKLIST: Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that this be adopted. Agreed.

2021/0170 TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Holt, proposed that this be adopted. Agreed.

2021/0171 TOWN CLERK JOB DESCRIPTION: Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that this be adopted. Agreed.

2021/0172 CEMETERY CARETAKER JOB DESCRIPTION Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, proposed that this be adopted. Agreed.

2021/0173 ACTIONS AND ACTION POINTS FROM MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 8<sup>TH</sup> MARCH: None.

2021/0174 MATTERS OF URGENCY: None.

2021/0175 MINUTES OF THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 22<sup>ND</sup> MARCH 2021: Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that these be approved for accuracy. Agreed. Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that these be adopted. Agreed.

2021/0176 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MEETING: Cllr. Sedgewick summarised the ongoing work of the committee.

2021/0177 MINUTES OF THE FINANCE AND STRATEGY COMMITTEE HELD ON 29<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2021: These were not available.

2021/0178 MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 23<sup>RD</sup> MARCH 2021: Cllr. Leat, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, proposed that these be approved for accuracy. Agreed. Cllr. Leat, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that these be adopted. Agreed.

2021/0179 MATTERS ARISING FROM ABOVE MEETING: None.

2021/0180 MINUTES OF THE OPERATIONS COMMITTEE HELD ON 6<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021:

Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, proposed that these be approved for accuracy. Agreed. Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that these be adopted. Agreed.

2021/0181 MATTERS ARISING FROM ABOVE MEETING: None.

2021/0182 MINUTES OF THE PLANNING WORKING PARTY HELD ON 13<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021: These were not available.

2021/0183 MINUTES OF THE EMPLOYMENT WORKING PARTY HELD ON 19<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2021: Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that these be approved for accuracy. Agreed. Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that these be adopted. Agreed.

The Town Clerk pointed out that the meeting had exceeded the time recommended under Standing Orders and that the “In Committee” section of the meeting had not even started.

Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that Standing Orders be suspended to allow the meeting to be continued. Agreed.

2021/0184 TOWN COUNCIL RESPONSE TO URBAN CAPACITY STUDY: Cllr. Leat proposed that this be forwarded to the District Council. Agreed.

2021/0185 TRAINING FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RISK MANAGEMENT: Cllr. Farrow proposed that this be taken in Committee. Agreed.

2021/0186 SECTION 106 EXPENDITURE UPDATE: Confirmation was given that there had been no further progress in respect of the skatepark. The Clerk will circulate information regarding the Raymonds Hill Play Area.

Cllr. Farrow proposed that the agenda items relating to identity badges, document control and updating of the website be deferred. Agreed.

2021/0187 ACTIONS PROTOCOL: Cllr. Sedgewick proposed that in all meetings minute of actions is included in minutes. Cllr. Walden Seconded the proposal. Agreed.

2021/0188 CORRESPONDENCE.

- a. Various re COVID 19
- b. Healthwatch Voices
- c. Devon Climate Emergency – notification of meeting.
- d. Anti-social behaviour and community safety officer – numerous.

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. Spurway seconded the proposal. Carried.

2021/0189 UPDATED ON TRANSFER TO OFFICE 365: Cllr. Holt requested an update on this process. The Responsible Financial Officer said that it is hoped that the work to migrate the emails would be completed at the end of April. The project manager needs to transfer the emails before access to SharePoint and teams can be put in place. Councillors would have the option to do some of this themselves or to have the contractor do it for them.

2021/0190 RAYMONDS HILL PLAY AREA: Following discussion, Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that all features in the proposal be installed at once, using money from CIL and reserves to enable this. Agreed.

2021/0191 TENANCY MATTERS – SENIOR CITIZENS CENTRE: The Responsible Financial Officer said that various expressions of interest had been received. Cllr. Holt, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that the tenants of the Arts Café be advised that they would not be able to put additional tables in the public area of the garden and should let the Town Council know, by a specified date, whether they still wished to operate a pop-up café by a specified date. Alternative arrangements for the storage of items currently in the premises will be put in place when appropriate.

2021/0192 TENANCY MATTERS – INSURANCE MATTERS: The Town Clerk will sign the required documents once the technical problems have been resolved.

2021/0193 RISK MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC PLANNING TRAINING: The Mayor expressed concern about the divergence between what was being offered and what it was felt required. The Deputy Clerk said that it would be wise to part company with the provider. She said that might involve paying for additional time involved in preparing the programme. Councillors expressed the view that there was too much emphasis on Strategic Planning when what had been sought was Risk Management and Assessment. Councillors felt that they the trainer had not responded to the requests which were made. They did not feel that any further costs should be incurred on top of the deposit already paid. Officers were asked to circulate the contract with the provider to Councillors.

2021/0194 STAFFING MATTERS: Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that the outstanding leave of two employees be bought out. Agreed.

Mitigation measures had been put in place to provide cover for the period between the departure of the Cemetery Caretakers and the appointment of any replacements, but this would result in reduction of existing staff hours for their own tasks. Consideration would be given to using contractors to cover interior decoration upstairs at the Guildhall rather than Town Council staff to free them up to cover at the Cemetery as necessary. The situation will be updated at the next Town Council meeting.

Signature ..... Date.....

Approved 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021, Min 2021/0248