

Axminster Town Council

Office Hours
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday
10am – 12 noon

Mayor: Cllr Jill Farrow
Locum Clerk: Paul Hayward

www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk



THE GUILDHALL
WEST STREET
AXMINSTER
DEVON
EX13 5NX

Tel. 01297 32088

Email: Clerk@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk

Axminster Town Council: Minutes of the meeting of the FULL Council

APPROVED AT FULL COUNCIL 14TH FEBRUARY 2022

Held in person on Monday 10th January 2022 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Farrow (JF) (Chair), Sedgewick (AS) (Vice-Chair), Brooker (A) (AB), Birnie (SBi), Hall (CH), Holt (SH), Paice (EP), Spurway (MS), Steadman (BS) and Walden (JW) (*Quorate*) Locum Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (LTC).

Cllrs. Sarah Jackson (SJ) and Andrew Moulding (AM) (*EDDC Ward members*).

11 members of the public. 1 member of the press.

Chair highlighted the building fire precautions and alerted those present to the fire exits. Chair also reminded those present of their personal obligations in relation to the ongoing CV19 situation and health guidance in that regard.

Public Forum session.

A member of the public made a representation in respect of the ongoing EDDC Local Plan Review, and the potential consequences on the Axe Valley Nutrient Plan in respect of the management of phosphate and nitrate levels in the River Axe. Chair thanked the resident for their attendance and representation.

Chair read a statement regarding the presentation of the Freedom of the (Axminster) Parish award to former Councillor Susan Spiller (previously resolved in 2019) which was bestowed in recognition of her eminent and outstanding service to the town and wider Axminster community over more than two decades. The award (by way of a certificate) was presented to Mrs. Spiller by the former Mayor of Axminster (in 2019) Cllr. Jeremy Walden who also spoke to thank Mrs. Spiller for her service and dedication.

Mrs. Spiller responded to thank Council for the award and also to thank those Councillors whom she had served with during her term (which included representing the Town Council as Mayor of Axminster). Members of the press and public took the opportunity to take photos of the ceremony.

Chair read a statement acknowledging the sad resignation of Cllr. Carol Doherty and thanked Carol for her service to the Council over the previous 6 years. CH (on behalf of the Chair of the Planning Committee) thanked Carol for her service and input to the Planning Committee. AS thanked Carol for her service on the Employment Committee.

Clerk advised that the resignation had resulted in a Casual Vacancy and that the formal legal process had been initiated.

Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.30pm

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FULL 22/001

To note members of committee present:

Attendance at meeting shown above.

FULL 22/002

To note and, if thought fit, to approve apologies for absence and reasons therefore:

Cllr. Brooker (S). Absence noted and reason and apology approved.

Cllr. Leat. Absence noted and reason and apology approved.

Cllr. Mynard. Absence noted and reason and apology approved.

FULL 22/003

To note members of committee not otherwise present and to receive any other apologies for absence:

Cllr. Ian Hall (DCC) sent his apologies.

FULL 22/004

To receive any declarations of interest from members of the committee in relation to items of business on this agenda and to note any dispensations previously afforded:

A declaration at this point does not preclude the need for members to declare any additional interests that may arise during this meeting.

None declared.

FULL 22/005

i) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the FULL Council meeting held on 13th December 2021 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes:

Approval of the minutes proposed by Chair, seconded by Cllr. Walden.

Resolved unanimously.

Minutes signed by Chair as a true and faithful record of the business of that meeting.

ii) Matters arising:

Public meeting to be arranged to discuss ongoing plans and future of Jubilee Field.

iii) To note the minutes of the Planning Committee held on 20th December 2021 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes.

Noted. No matters arising.

FULL 22/006

To consider any matters listed on this agenda that Councillors consider should be dealt with as confidential business as per the provisions of The Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960: None raised by committee members.

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FULL 22/007

To consider co-option of eligible candidates for the casual vacancy that exists as Town Councillor for the Weycroft Ward:

LTC confirmed that only one application for co-option had been received by the published deadline and that the candidate's eligibility to stand as a co-opted member had been verified.

It was therefore proposed by Chair, seconded by SBi that Angela Huskisson (AH) be herewith co-opted to serve as Town Councillor for Weycroft Ward. In the absence of Cllr. Huskisson, LTC was delegated to make arrangements to meet with AH and obtain her signature on the formal Declaration of Acceptance of Office form. Resolved unanimously.

Chair proposed that agenda item FULL 22/009 be brought forward on the agenda running order. Resolved unanimously.

FULL 22/009

To consider planning matters:

a) Planning applications awaiting consideration and decision; the Town Council being a statutory consultee:

i) 21/3025/MFUL – Land west of Prestaller Farm, off Beavor Lane, Axminster.
Erection of 30 dwellings incl. highways, landscaping and drainage works.

Chair proposed that Council's Standing Orders be temporarily suspended to allow public representation to be heard. Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

Representation received from a member of the public regarding potential disruption to bats and other wildlife and concerns over removal of established and protected Devon hedgerows. Chair thanked speaker for their representation.

Chair proposed that Council's Standing Orders be reinstated to preclude further public representation. Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

After lengthy discussion, and representations from members on various issues relating to the application, it was proposed by CH, seconded by SH, that Council did NOT support the application on the following grounds:

- i) That the application contravenes EDDC Local Plan Strategy 20 in respect of potential harm to the River Axe and non-compliance with the developing Axe Nutrient Management Plan.
- ii) That the development (as proposed) has the potential to exacerbate flooding issues in the Millbrook area and that no measures have been proposed to mitigate or minimise flood risk in this area and in areas downstream/elsewhere in the town.

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- iii) That the applicant has failed to provide either an Environmental Impact Assessment, or a Waste Audit Statement, to demonstrate how the proposed development would contribute towards the bio-diversity and climate change aims and objectives previously agreed as policy by this Town Council (there being no mention of provision for renewable energy services to the dwellings).
- iv) That the Council has been unable to establish the provision of data/evidence to demonstrate measures to safeguard habitats for protected species such as bats and dormice.
- v) That the applicant has failed to provide satisfactory evidence to demonstrate proposals to alleviate traffic and highway safety concerns within the housing development to the west of the proposed development site which would form the primary point of access for new occupants.
- vi) Finally, that Council would wish to see additional landscaping mitigation measures to compensate for the loss of hedgerows, trees and other native habitats.

The motion to object to the application was resolved unanimously.

- ii) 21/3194/FUL – Higher Uphay Farm, Membury Road, Axminster.
Erection of roof over existing silage clamp.

It was proposed by CH, seconded by BS, that Council supported the application.
Resolved unanimously.

- iii) 21/3261/FUL – 10 Beavor Lane, Axminster.
Erection of enclosed porch.

It was proposed by CH, seconded by JW, that Council supported the application.
Resolved unanimously.

FULL 22/008

To consider financial matters:

a) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve payments for December 2021:

RFO (PH) had circulated a schedule of payment for December to the value of £17869.21.
Payment approval proposed by Chair, seconded by CH. Resolved unanimously.

b) To consider RFO's financial report:

RFO (PH) had circulated a report for members perusal and review.
Noted. No questions for the RFO.

c) To approve the Town Council's expenditure budget and precept demand for 2022-23:

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AB, that the expenditure budget for the 2022-23 financial year be set as £342,666 with a precept demand to be sent to EDDC for the sum of £263,161. Resolved unanimously.

Chair gave a short statement acknowledging Council's regret that an increase was necessary at a time of constrained and uncertain household budgets, but adding that the proposed increase was less than 1p per day for a Band D equivalent household when compared to the figure for 2021-22. A more comprehensive statement would be issued prior to the receipt for the EDDC Council Tax demand in March.

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d) To consider re-investment of the maturing Cambridge Deposit Bond:

It was proposed by JW, seconded by MS, that the maturing capital bond, plus interest paid to date, be reinvested with the same financial institution for a further 12m as per their invitation at the rate notified, and that an additional sum from Council's reserves be added to that cumulative sum to take the entire deposit upto the £85,000 FSCS capped limit to afford Council the maximum level of deposit protection. Resolved 9 votes for, 1 objection.

e) To consider recommendation from RFO/LTC that a new current account be opened with Unity Trust Bank and that, once opened, a sum of £85,000 to assist towards Council's Financial Risk Management process and policy:

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that the account be opened as expeditiously as possible and that – once opened – a capital sum transfer of £85000 be made. It was suggested that the initial bank mandate signatories mirror those for the primary Lloyds account. Resolved unanimously.

f) To consider a grant application received from Cloakham Lawn Park Run Group:

Approval of grant award for £1000 proposed by Chair, seconded by SBi. Resolved unanimously.

FULL 22/010

To consider the options paper for potential Old Courthouse re-purposing:

AS has circulated an options paper to all members containing 3 potential proposals. After a lengthy discussion, and consideration of the potential uses for the building complex, the current/pending tenancy arrangements and the continued popularity of the public garden, it was proposed by Chair – seconded by CH – that Council wished to categorically discount Option TWO ie. the possible sale of the building to a 3rd party and the loss of a community building/space for the town and residents. Resolved unanimously.

AS suggested that the OCH Working Party met once again in light of this unanimous support for retention of the building as a town asset, and consider the two remaining option choices and seek costings for professional fees, building/repurposing works and amenity/service improvements and then bring this matter back to Council with a further report as soon as possible. LTC was directed to liaise with the local Fire Officer to seek a meeting to assess the potential risks. SBi., EP and AB were invited to join the working party group.

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FULL 22/011

Presentation of the Robin Cross “Citizen of the Year” Award by the Mayor, Cllr. Jill Farrow.

The Mayor presented the award to Karen Taylor, who had created the Nourish Food Support organisation, thanking her for the incredible volunteer service she provided to those in need within the town and recognising its role in combatting loneliness and encouraging social engagement whilst alleviating food poverty. Invited to say a few words, Karen thanked the Council for the award and outlined the reasons why she had originally established Nourish and highlighted the ways in which she believed it had been of benefit to the town. The award also carried a £100 cash prize * which Karen kindly donated to the Pippins Community Café.

* Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 applies.

FULL 22/012

To consider the formal protocol for future meetings of the Town Council and Committees in terms of titles, officer roles, procedure and other aspects of nomenclature:

After discussion, it was proposed by Chair, seconded by EP, that the following protocols be applied to meetings of the Council and Committees with immediate effect;

- i) That Councillors present be identified within the minutes of that meeting.
- ii) That Councillors can be referred to by their initials as a means of keeping the minutes concise.
- iii) That the Chair of the meeting be referred to as the Chair (as opposed to the Mayor – a civic title) within a Town Council/Committee meeting, with all other members being permitted to refer to one another by their Christian names if they so wished and that this would not be seen in any way as a denigration of their role as a member of the Council.
- iv) That the Proper Officer/Attending Officer be referred to by their professional title ie. The Clerk, the RFO etc. (see v. below)
- v) That gender titles were no longer required ie. Madame Chair, Mr. Clerk, Cllr. Mrs X, Chairman etc
- vi) That the Mayor will be referred to (and addressed) as the Mayor only when wearing the robes (and chains) of that Office whilst on formal Council business.
- vii) That, wherever possible, the start time of a Council or Committee meeting would be 7pm (19:00hrs).

Resolved unanimously. LTC: Please note and action accordingly.

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FULL 22/013

To consider a proposal to make future meetings of the Council including committee meetings (until a date to be agreed upon) Consultative” only; to be held via Zoom or other digital / web platform in light of ongoing Coronavirus health risks and with recommendations being duly delegated to the (Locum) Proper Officer to administer and execute:

**It was proposed by JW, seconded by Chair, that this motion be approved.
Resolved unanimously.**

FULL 22/014

To consider any matters considered as urgent by the presiding Chair:

Clerk was asked to arrange a physical new Councillor induction/training session at the earliest opportunity but to include all members in the invitation email chain. It was also noted that DALC induction training via Zoom session had been arranged for 3/3.

It was also suggested that the forthcoming public meeting regarding the future of the Jubilee Field be arranged for the week commencing 7th February so that the outcomes could be discussed at the following FULL Council meeting on the 14th. Clerk to liaise with Cllrs. Hall and Holt accordingly.

FULL 22/015

**To note the date, time and venue for the next FULL meeting of the Council:
14th February 2022 at 7pm in the Guildhall, Axminster**

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.45pm.

Signed Date : 14th February 2022