

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

APPROVED on 14th March 2022; Part ONE version (Redacted).

Held in person on Monday 14th February 2022 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Farrow (JF) (Chair), Sedgewick (AS) (Vice-Chair), Brooker (A) (AB), Brooker (S) (SBr.), Hall (CH), Huskisson (AH), Leat (SL), Paice (EP), Spurway (MS), Steadman (BS) and Walden (JW) (*Meeting was quorate*).

Locum Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (LTC).

Cllrs. Sarah Jackson (SJ) (*EDDC Ward member*).

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

Chair welcomed all in attendance. 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 proposed celebrations in June 2022 relating to HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Chair thanked him for attending and assured the speaker that Council would support community organisations who wished to arrange events over the Jubilee weekend. The Guildhall had been pre-served at the Council's expense to provide a "bad-weather" alternative to any outside events.

A second member of the public spoke to thank the Council for the recent amenity improvements at the North Street allotment site.

Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.10pm

FC22/016

To note members of committee present:

Attendance at meeting shown above.

FC22/017

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

Cllr. Birnie (SBI.) Absence noted and reason and apology approved.

Cllr. Holt (SH) Absence noted and reason and apology approved.

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

Proposed by Chair, seconded by AS. Resolved unanimously.

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FC22/018

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

Cllr. Ian Hall (DCC/EDDC) and Cllr. Andrew Moulding sent their apologies. Noted.

FC22/019

i) 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.

ii) To consider request from Cllr. Farrow for a dispensation under the Localism Act 2011 in relation to matters pertaining to allotments in Axminster parish:

JF is seeking a dispensation in light of her pecuniary interests in this matter by virtue of her partners tenancy with the Town Council. Section 33 of the Localism Act 2011 (ss.c.) applies.

It was proposed by JW, seconded by AS that the dispensation be afforded until May 2023.

Resolved 10 votes for, 0 against and 1 abstention (JF).

FC22/020

i) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the FULL Council meeting held on 10th January 2022 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes:

Chair asked that minute FC22/012 be amended to replace the words 'Christian names' with 'forenames'.

Approval of the substantive amended minutes proposed by Chair, seconded by JW.

Resolved unanimously.

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

ii) No matters arising.

iii) To note the minutes of the following committee meetings held (as dated below) and to consider any matters arising from those minutes:

a) Planning Committee meeting held 17/01/2022

b) Planning Committee meeting held 31/01/2022

c) Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held 31/01/2022

d) Employment Committee meeting held 27/01/2022

e) Employment Committee meeting held 04/02/2022

f) Operations Committee meeting held 01/02/2022

All minutes duly noted. No matters arising raised by members.

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FC22/021

To consider the recommendations from those committees (as per schedule circulated to members & published online) and, if thought fit, to approve these as Council policy (by way of resolution) *

* Only recommendations which fall outside of the relevant Committee terms of reference require FULL Council approval, unless the relevant Committee has formally deferred the decision to FULL Council, as specified within the minutes of that meeting.

S&F Committee meeting 31/01/2022:

- i) That FULL Council consider and agree upon the level of financial expenditure by the Council in relation to celebration of the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty The Queen in June 2022. **It was previously resolved by Council that the sum of £5000 be set aside to cover expenditure relating to the celebration of the Platinum Jubilee. Noted. See FC22/25 below.**
- ii) That FULL Council consider the recommendation that Council (and its committees) do not ordinarily meet in August annually hereafter. **Chair proposed that consideration of this recommendation be deferred until agenda item FC22/032. Agreed.**
- iii) That FULL Council consider the recommendation that a grant award (outside of the criteria of the extant Grant Award Policy) be made to Axminster Community Shed group for £2000. **Chair proposed that consideration of this recommendation be deferred until agenda item FC22/028c. Agreed.**

Operations Committee 01/02/2022

- i) That FULL Council consider the recommendation to suspend their Financial Regulations and proceed to commission Contractor P to provide architectural support services to the Council for the sum of £2750 (basis for suspension; only 1 quote obtained despite numerous enquiries and requests; deadlines for other actions require decision) **It was proposed by Chair, seconded by MS, that this recommendation be approved by FULL Council. Resolved unanimously.**
- ii) That FULL Council consider the recommendation to proceed with expenditure of up to £3000 towards the provision of Eco-WC amenity at the three allotments sites by way of improved amenity and public health benefits. **It was proposed by Chair, seconded by MS, that this recommendation be approved by FULL Council. Resolved unanimously.**

FC22/022

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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FC22/023

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

Prior to the start of the consideration of this item, Cllr. Charles Hall spoke to tender his resignation as a Town Councillor effective from the 18th February 2022. Both the Chair, and AS, thanked CH for his service to the Council and wider Axminster community. LTC outlined the process that would now be followed to fill this new Casual Vacancy.

In respect of the current Casual Vacancy on the Town Ward, LTC confirmed that two applications for co-option had been received by the published deadline and that the candidates eligibility to stand as co-opted members had been verified in both cases. LTC circulated paper ballots to all members present and after the vote had been taken, and the results tallied, LTC announced that Kara Burrough (KB) had received the majority of votes cast and was therefore co-opted to the Town Council. LTC also advised that Cllr. Burrough could join Councillors with immediate effect as she had been served an agenda summons beforehand with the requisite notice period. KB signed her Declaration of Acceptance of Office, witnessed by the Proper Officer. Chair welcomed KB to the Council's membership.

FC22/024

To receive and note a report from the Proper Officer's regarding NALC advice on Defamation (referred to as Legal Topic Note (LTN) 30), the review of which forms part of Council's Annual risk assessment and management protocol:

Noted.

FC22/025

To consider matters pertaining to Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022;

i) To consider local events and how the Council might assist community groups and organisations in celebrating the event;

Chair explained that the Council had already pre-booked the Guildhall for the entire Jubilee celebration period to provide a venue for any outside events which required an indoor contingency in case of adverse weather conditions. The Guildhall Manager had kindly agreed to coordinate any Jubilee bookings. AS expressed a keen desire that the formal opening of the Jubilee Field could be coordinated with the rest of the Jubilee weekend events. Noted.

Continued overleaf.

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FC22/025

To consider matters pertaining to Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022 (continued):

ii) To consider expenditure related to the celebration of this Jubilee event;

For the avoidance of doubt (given that the previous resolution in this respect was some time ago), it was (re)proposed by Chair, seconded by CH, that the Town Council earmark £5000 from its General Reserves towards expenditure relating to the celebration of the Platinum Jubilee in June 2022; such expenditure to fall under the powers of the Local Government Act 1972, section 137. Resolved unanimously.

LTC was at pains to explain that the S137 expenditure was not a grant but merely expenditure relating to reimbursement of eligible expenses and costs by community groups and other organisations. The Council's adopted Grant Award Policy did not apply.

Furthermore, it was proposed by JW, seconded by CH, that the following financial limits of delegated authority be applied to said expenditure so as to remove any delays or unnecessary administrative burden to the reimbursement of appropriate and eligible expenditure by community groups;

i) That expenditure in this respect of up to £500 could be approved by delegated authority of the Chair of Strategy & Finance Committee or the Chair of Operations Committee and the (Locum) RFO; such spending to be reported to FULL Council as soon as possible.

ii) That expenditure in this respect from £500 to £2000 could be approved by delegated authority of the Chair of Strategy & Finance Committee and the Chair of Operations Committee and the (Locum) RFO; such spending to be reported to FULL Council as soon as possible.

iii) That expenditure in this respect over £2000 must be approved by a resolution of the FULL Council.

In all cases, the (Locum) RFO to maintain a Register of Expenditure in this respect which should be presented to FULL Council each month as part of the regular financial reports.

iii) To consider accepting the offer of a Jubilee Oak tree from EDDC to be planted at a public location in the town (this location to be agreed upon).

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by JW, that the Town Council accept the offer of a Jubilee Oak tree from EDDC (with thanks) with the planting to take place at a designated position within Jubilee Field (planting of the tree to be slightly delayed due to ongoing legal transfer arrangements between EDDC and ATC). Resolved unanimously.

LTC was asked to publicise the planting event accordingly when dates agreed upon.

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FC22/026

To consider update on Town Council's acquisition of, and the future plans for, the Jubilee Field (recreation area) off Boxfield Road; to receive report from CH and SH on the recent public meeting held in the Guildhall on 8th February 2022.

In the absence of SH, CH presented the report.

The event on the 8th had gone smoothly and was well-attended.

Members of the public were grateful for being consulted and were generally in support of the preferred option (one).

It was confirmed that once the field passed into Council's ownership, the TC would be immediately responsible for maintenance, insurance and inspection of the land, assets and play equipment therein.

Chair proposed suspension of Standing Orders to permit representation from non-member of the Council. Seconded JW. Resolved.

Cllr. Jackson (EDDC) spoke to outline the final stages of the Land Disposal Process between EDDC and ATC which should conclude in the first two weeks of March.

The conversation then moved onto the subject of Devon Air Ambulance Trust (DAAT) Night Landing provision on the site and whilst it was acknowledged that the field had been used previously for daytime air ambulance landings, the majority consensus of opinion was that adapting the field to accommodate night landing flights would impinge upon the proposed amenity and landscaping projects planned for the site. Chair wished to confirm that the Town Council absolutely supported the Air Ambulance service and recognised its contribution to the well-being of the town and would also wish to assist in finding suitable landing sites for the DAAT helicopter.

FC22/027

To consider update on Axminster's ongoing draft Neighbourhood Plan (NHP).

Chair of the NHP Steering group, AS, spoke to provide an update report.

A draft version of the N/Plan document had been submitted to EDDC N/Plan Officers and feedback/suggestions had been received which the Steering group were taking on board in their revisions. The latest consultation response report would be published on the website shortly. Mr Knapman (DK) was liaising with EDDC to create the required Mapping Document and AS wished to express her thanks to DK for his time and efforts in this regard. All in all, things were progressing as per the timetable proposed and agreed upon.

Continued overleaf.

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FC22/028

To consider financial matters:

a) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve payments for January 2022:

RFO (PH) had circulated a schedule of payment for December to the value of £22026.56.

Payment approval proposed by Chair, seconded by JW. 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 consider recommendation from Strategy and Finance Committee for a grant award of £2000 to the Axminster Community Shed organisation (which falls outside of the extant grant policy previously adopted by the Council).

Approval of grant award for £2000 proposed by Chair, seconded by BS.

Resolved unanimously. (LGA 1972 (MP) 1976 s.19 applies re: power to spend).

FC22/029

To consider planning matters:

a) To consider any planning applications awaiting consideration (and decision) that the presiding Chair wishes to be dealt with at this meeting (such applications to be detailed on a supplementary published agenda).

No applications to be considered at the time of this meeting. No further action required.

FC22/030

To consider whether the Town Council wishes to submit nominations for EDDC's Standards Committee (Local Council member) vacancy:

No nominations were put forward. Noted. No further action required.

FC22/031

To consider whether the Town Council wishes to submit a formal response to the ongoing EDDC Code of Conduct Consultation exercise (by 14/03/2022):

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SL, that the Town Council did not wish to submit a formal corporate/collective response to the consultation. Resolved unanimously.

Chair did highlight the overall significance of the consultation and suggested that individual members may wish to contribute in their own names if they so wished.

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FC22/032

To consider the meeting schedule/timetable/frequency for Town Council and Committee meetings for the forthcoming year; Chair to speak on this matter:

Chair suggested that a wider discussion/consideration of this topic was necessary in light of the recent “benchmarking” exercise undertaken. Chair asked LTC to forward a copy of the report to all members for their perusal and review. Chair suggested that this matter be deferred for further consideration until after the recruitment of the permanent Clerk/RFO had been finalised. Agreed by all present.

Correspondence from the Chair of the Carnival Committee had been received which requested that the Council surrender one or more of their regular Monday bookings of the Guildhall to allow a fundraising “bingo” session/event to be held in its place. Chair thanked the Carnival Committee for their correspondence but explained that the business of Council must proceed in order to provide the democratic process for the residents of the town and that other nights of the week were available for that social event. However, the points made in their correspondence were noted and LTC was asked to provide MS with a list of the dates when Council was NOT meeting to see if they could provide some capacity for other events.

JW suggested that the matter could be re-considered in 2023 during the run-up to the next electoral period. Noted.

SL asked that a similar item be considered at the next Planning Committee meeting to allow members to discuss ways in which the number of planning committee meetings could be reduced without adversely affecting the Council’s duty to act as a planning consultee on behalf of the town. Noted.

Finally, it was proposed by Chair, seconded by BS, that Council should not ordinarily meet in August each year (to provide a break to members and staff). Extraordinary meetings can be convened to deal with any business considered as urgent that cannot be held over until September. Resolved unanimously. LTC: Please note.

FC22/033

To receive, and discuss, report on potential future engagement/liason with Axminster Chamber of Commerce (and Totally Locally Axminster group):

In the absence of SH who represented the Council on this external body, Chair proposed that this agenda item be deferred for consideration at a later date. Agreed.

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FC22/034

To consider, and agree upon, date for the Annual Parish Meeting and to consider invitations for guest speakers at that event:

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by BS, that the date of the Axminster Annual Parish Meeting be set for Monday 4th April 2022 at 7pm in the Guildhall Main Room. Resolved unanimously.

Chair suggested that the main theme of the event be "Axminster's Community Spirit" and that, as such, representatives from as many community groups as possible should be invited to come and use the meeting as a public platform to speak about what their group does, how it benefits the town and how residents can get involved. This suggestion met with member's overwhelming support.

LTC: Please note and action accordingly.

FC22/035

To consider any matters of urgency for noting/Chair's announcements:

Chair highlighted that the 2022 Great British Spring Clean was shortly due to happen (25 March – 10 April) and that the Council was keen to promote the event as part and parcel of the community efforts to address littering, plastic waste and overall town appearance.

FC22/036

To note the date of the next FULL meeting of the Town Council; 14th March 2022.

Noted.

Vice-Chair 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.

All members of the public were thanked for their attendance and participation by the Chair and the meeting moved into closed session (Part Two). Recording of meeting was stopped to ensure a full Part One recording was available. The Part Two session was also recorded.

See next page for Part Two Minutes.

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FC22/037 (IC)

To consider a confidential employment matter regarding a former employee of the Town Council and to agree upon any actions considered appropriate by the Council:

This matter was considered in Part Two session and a recommendation made in relation to the matter in question. Proposal was put forward by Chair, seconded by CH. Resolved.

LTC: Please note and action accordingly.

FC22/038 (IC)

To consider the recommendation from the Employment Committee regarding the variation to the contract of employment for the Locum Town Clerk:

This matter was considered in Part Two session and a recommendation made in relation to the matter in question. Proposal was put forward by Chair, seconded by CH. Resolved.

LTC: Please note and action accordingly.

FC22/039 (IC)

To consider the recommendation from the Employment Committee regarding the recruitment of a permanent Town Clerk/RFO position.

This matter was considered in Part Two session and a recommendation made in relation to the matter in question. Proposal was put forward by Chair, seconded by EP. Resolved.

This matter was therefore referred to the Employment Committee for action in terms of job advertising, salary scale, job/person specification and shortlisting/interview selection.

LTC: Please note and action accordingly in conjunction with the Chair of EmployComm., AS.

FC22/040 (IC)

To consider a confidential matter pertaining to employee remuneration:

This matter was considered in Part Two session and a recommendation made in relation to the matter in question. Proposal was put forward by AS, seconded by JW. Resolved.

LTC: Please note and action accordingly.

With no further business to deal with, the Chair closed the meeting at 21.30pm.

Signed Date : 14th March 2022