

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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Tel. 01297 32088

Email: Clerk@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk

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

APPROVED at FULL Council 11th April 2022; Part ONE version (Redacted).

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

Present: Cllrs. Farrow (JF) (Chair), Birnie (SBI.), Brooker (A) (AB), Brooker (S) (SBr.), Burrough (KB), Holt (SH), Huskisson (AH), Leat (SL), Paice (EP), Spurway (MS) and Walden (JW) (*Meeting was quorate*).

Cllrs. Sedgewick and Steadman were present via Zoom link.

Locum Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (LTC).

4 members of the public.

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 challenges facing retailers in the town and the need for joined-up thinking between the Council and the Commercial sector. It was agreed that the Council had an active part to play in the well-being of the town's economy and that more could be done to promote what the Town Council was doing in support of the high street retailers. Noted. Chair thanked speaker for their contribution. Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.10pm

FC22/041

To note members of committee present:

Attendance at meeting shown above.

FC22/042

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

Cllr. Mynard (MM). Absence noted and reason and apology approved.

Cllr. Sedgewick (AS) Absence noted and reason and apology approved.

Cllr. Steadman (BS) Absence noted and reason and apology approved.

Proposed by Chair, seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously.

Continued overleaf.

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FC22/043

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

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

FC22/044

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. Dispensation afforded to Cllr. Farrow (14/02/2022) was noted.

FC22/045

i) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the FULL Council meeting held on 14th February 2022 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes:

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 21/02/2022

b) Planning Committee meeting held 07/03/2022

c) Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held 28/02/2022

d) Employment Committee meeting held 15/02/2022

e) Operations Committee meeting held 01/03/2022

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

FC22/046

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.*

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S&F Committee meeting 28/02/2022:

SF22/021b) Recommendation: That the draft FI/DS strategy document be adopted as policy with immediate effect and that it form part of the Council's future Risk Management Assessment protocol.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that this recommendation be approved by FULL Council. Resolved unanimously.

SF22/021c) Recommendation: That the draft Internal Financial Control Review document be adopted as policy. *It was proposed by JW, seconded by EP, that this recommendation be approved by FULL Council. Resolved unanimously.*

SF22/022a) Recommendation: That (in relation to proposed expenditure pertaining to celebration of Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee):

- i) Expenditure of up to £200 could be reimbursed by the LTC/RFO subject to reporting mechanism below (see v) without further authority being sought.*
- ii) Expenditure between £200 and £500 could be reimbursed under the delegated authority of either the Chair, or Vice-Chair, of the S&FCOMM in consultation with the LTC/RFO subject to reporting mechanism below (see v).*
- iii) Expenditure between £500 and £1000 could be reimbursed only after a resolution of the S&FCOMM, subject to reporting mechanism below (see v).*
- iv) Expenditure over £1000 could only be reimbursed only after a resolution of the FULL Council, subject to reporting mechanism below (see v).*
- v) All expenditure relating to reimbursement payments in connection with QJ22 as per the powers afforded by S137 of the Local Government Act 1972 must be tabulated and provided to members monthly as part of the ongoing future Financial Reporting protocol.*

It was proposed by SH, seconded by EP, that this recommendation be approved by FULL Council. Resolved unanimously.

Operations Committee 01/03/2022

OC22/065e)

i) Liaison with Axminster Chamber of Commerce/Totally Locally re: Banner display project. Recommendation: That the Council support the project by way of a £2500 contribution.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by KB, that this recommendation be approved by FULL Council. Resolved unanimously.

2 further recommendations were to be considered under Part Two business (see 22/0641C).

FC22/047

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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FC22/048

To receive update on the Casual Vacancy that exists as Town Councillor for the Weycroft Ward created by the resignation of former Councillor, Charles Hall:

After receiving a report from the Locum Town Clerk, the Chair noted that no petition for an election had been demanded and that, consequently, the vacancy could be filled by the process of co-option. Chair proposed that this matter be reconsidered at the next available FULL meeting of the Council, with advertising via all appropriate channels to encourage candidates to come forward.

Chair proposed that agenda item FC22/057 be brought forward for consideration. Agreed.

FC22/057

To consider the Urban Renewal Report provided to Council and to discuss how Axminster Town Council can best work with partner agencies and key stakeholders to facilitate change, improvement and economic regeneration in the town.

This report had been circulated to all members prior to the meeting, and had been created by DCC Economy Team in conjunction with EDDC and other partner agencies.

After a lengthy debate over the role of the Town Council in this matter, and the need for all stakeholders to work together for the common good, **it was proposed by Chair, seconded by KB, that the Town Council notify DCC and EDDC Economic Development Officers that – as per the suggestion for “immediate actions” within the report – the Town Council liaise with the authorities to establish a Regeneration Board (funded by DCC). Resolved unanimously.** LTC was directed to notify all parties of the decision and to organise an initial meeting of Town Council, DCC, EDDC and the Chamber of Commerce (incl. Totally Locally) to set the ball rolling and to decide the formation, focus and forward-direction of the Board. Noted.

Chair proposed that the published running order of the agenda be resumed. Agreed.

FC22/049 i)

To consider nominations for the vacant Town Councillor positions on the Guildhall Management Committee (GMC):

SBi. and KB both volunteered to act as Town Council representatives on the GMC.

Proposed by Chair, seconded by SL, that their nominations be approved. Resolved unan.

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FC22/049 ii)

To consider nominations for the vacant membership positions on the established Town Council Committees:

- i) Planning Committee
- ii) Strategy & Finance Committee
- iii) Operations Committee

SBi. and KB volunteered to serve on Strategy and Finance Committee

EP volunteered to serve on the Operations Committee.

Proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that these three Committee membership appointments be approved. Resolved unanimously.

SH also asked that the membership of Council's Working Parties be considered in the near future. Noted.

FC22/050

To receive update pertaining to the Town's celebration of Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June 2022:

LTC confirmed that requests for the funding of events were starting to trickle through and that these could be responded to as per the scheme of delegated authority as approved earlier (Recommendations from S&FComm.) in this meeting (FC22/046).

FC22/051

To consider update on Town Council's acquisition of, and the future plans for, the Jubilee Field (recreation area) off Boxfield Road; to consider designs and quotations for the proposed 'Jubilee Arch' at the entrance to the field from Boxfield Road:

Chair thanked EDDC for their generous donation of a Jubilee Oak tree which had been planted today (14/3). Chair asked that a suitable social media post be issued. Noted.

Chair proposed that the consideration of the quotes for the installation of a Jubilee Archway be taken in Part two in light of the commercial confidentiality of the quotes to be considered. Seconded by SL. Resolved unanimously. (See FC22/051 IC below).

FC22/052

To consider financial matters:

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

RFO (PH) had circulated a schedule of payment for February 2022 to the value of £39061.39. **Payment approval proposed by Chair, seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously.**

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FC22/052

To consider financial matters (continued):

b) To consider RFO's financial report:

RFO (PH) had circulated a report for members perusal and review.

Noted. No questions for the RFO.

Members were also asked to consider a Part Two RFO report which contained financial information relating to Council tenancies which was deemed commercially confidential.

Chair thanked LTC for his work as RFO and re-affirmed Council's intention to publish as much as possible of their financial data online (via the website) so that members of the public could access the data as and when required; this would be a further step towards greater openness and transparency.

FC22/053

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.

FC22/054

To review effectiveness of recent new Councillor induction training and to consider whether to hold a Councillor Open Day in the near future:

Members expressed their satisfaction on the outcomes of the recent Induction session and Chair offered to sit with any new Councillor and watch the recording if that would assist them. A suggestion was raised that another "Councillor Open Day" be arranged as the last one was felt to be a very positive and helpful event. A date in August / September 2022 was proposed to allow staffing issues to settle down and for new members to acquaint themselves with Council business and protocol. Noted. SH offered to take the lead in bringing this exercise forward nearer the time.

FC22/055

To consider the recent Devon and Somerset Fire Service CRMP consultation report and to consider any comments/actions arising thereof:

LTC spoke on the subject of the report and recent messages from members of the public regarding possible loss of station facilities. Members wished to express their concerns about any downgrading of the Axminster Station's equipment or reductions in the service capability to respond to emergencies locally and directed LTC to make further enquiries and return to Council with the relevant evidence/reports once obtained. Noted.

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FC22/056

To consider the latest EDDC Public WC report and its impact on Axminster's amenity and facility provision:

Members noted the report provided by EDDC and expressed their support for the retention (and improvement) of WC facilities at the West Street location. Chair proposed that no formal comment be submitted to the consultation. Agreed by all members. Noted.

FC22/057

To consider the Urban Renewal Report provided to Council and to discuss how Axminster Town Council can best work with partner agencies and key stakeholders to facilitate change, improvement and economic regeneration in the town:

See earlier part of this meeting for consideration of this matter.

FC22/058

To consider proposal by Cllr. Birnie that the Town Council should – in line with its published Climate Change Aims and Objectives – seek to reduce the usage of single-use plastic bottles brought into the Guildhall by members of the public and Councillors alike:

SBi. spoke as to why this motion had been brought to FULL Council.

After discussion, the following recommendations were made:

- i) That the Town Council ask all employees, Councillors and members of the public to NOT bring single-use plastic bottles (SUPB) into the Guildhall.
 - ii) That the Town Council liaise with the Guildhall Management Committee to work towards the phasing out of SUPB within their licensed bar activity.
 - iii) That the Council re-visit the suggestion that refillable water bottle stations are provided around the town to encourage the use of recyclable/reusable water containers.
- LTC was directed to obtain quotes and specifications for such facilities/equipment and bring back to OPSCOMM at the first possible opportunity.
- iv) That a "plastic audit" of the Town Council offices and facilities be undertaken in the near future (subject to officer and member availability).

LTC was asked to bring a report back to Council later in the year with evidence of success and details of working arrangements with partner organisations ie GHMC. Noted.

FC22/059

To note the installation and commissioning of the Town Council's Vehicle Activated Speed device (VAS) and to agree upon a frequency cycle for the placement of the VAS across the 5 mounting points in the parish:

LTC confirmed that poles and hardware had been installed and that the VAS was in operation. Members agreed to a 2-weekly rotation cycle between pole mounting sites, duly delegated to the LTC and Handyperson to arrange (Chapter 8 certification required).

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FC22/060

To consider a proposed amendment to the Planning Committee Terms of Reference to allow the Chair (and Vice-Chair) of that Committee, in conjunction with the Council's Proper Officer, to submit planning comments to EDDC by way of their delegated authority to act in this regard for applications which are either i) minor or ii) which must be commented upon by a date when no formal meeting of the Planning Committee is possible (any such delegated authority taken to be relayed to members of the committee beforehand and a majority consensus opinion sought prior to comment submission); such delegated authority to be reported to the next meeting of the Planning Committee:

After debate on the merits (and pitfalls) of such a scheme of delegation for smaller planning applications, which was supported by the Chair of the Planning Committee (SL), **it was proposed by SH, seconded by Chair, that an initial trial of a suitable scheme/policy of delegation be implemented, with a review on its effectiveness and success in reducing Council meetings to be undertaken in 3 months. Resolved unanimously.**

LTC was directed to create a suitable Delegation Policy (draft) for members of Planning Committee to consider & review and to forward all planning applications to members (as received) with suggestions on response/delegation/timings in conjunction with the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Planning Committee. Noted.

SL welcomed the inclusion of hyperlinks within the published Planning Committee agendas which made review of the application being considered a great deal easier.

FC22/061i)

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

None raised.

FC22/061ii)

To note correspondence received from parishioner regarding noise nuisance from aircraft traffic during the night; Council to agree upon action/response:

Members noted the correspondence but agreed that the Town Council had no powers to address to problems/issues raised and asked the LTC to correspond accordingly and suggesting that the correspondent contact the CAA or the MOD. Copy to be sent to EDDC and the Exeter Airport Consultative Committee. Noted.

FC22/062

To note the date of the next FULL meeting of the Town Council; 11th April 2022 with the Annual Parish Meeting to be held on 4th April 2022. Noted.

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SH 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. Seconded by Chair. Resolved.

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.

Part TWO business to be considered.

FC22/063 (IC)

To consider a confidential employment matter regarding the recent outcome of the NCJ 2020-21 Pay Settlement negotiations:

LTC provided a report outlining the impact of the 1.75% pay settlement for 2020-21 which must be backdated to 1st April 2021 for all employees still on the payroll and which could be paid – upon request – to members of staff who left between the 1/4/2021 and the date of this meeting. *Proposed by Chair, seconded by EP, that this pay settlement award be paid to all staff currently in employment with the Council, backdated accordingly.*

FC22/064 (IC)

To consider any recommendations from Committees which are deemed to be confidential by way of the financial information to be discussed/considered:

SF22/025 (IC) To consider (in conjunction with the Operations Committee) whether Council wishes to enter into a consultancy agreement with a H&S Contractor to maintain full H&S Compliance.

After discussion and consideration of the proposal from ACORN H&S Consultancy for a retained H&S consultancy service at £1260 (net) per annum and five additional consultancy visits at a total cost of £2750 (net) to enable the Town Council to attain full H&S compliance, *Approval of this recommendation which fell outside of the S&FCOMM. Terms of Reference was proposed by Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.*

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FC22/064 (IC)

To consider any recommendations from Committees which are deemed to be confidential by way of the financial information to be discussed/considered (cont.):

SF 22/027 (IC) To consider matters pertaining to building tenancies and hires; To receive report from Locum Clerk on ongoing tenancy matters and to consider future leases/licences and revisions thereof.

A recommendation was made by S&F Committee in relation to the matter of an ongoing tenancy in a Council owned building. The details of this recommendation are redacted as they relate to a 3rd party and, as such, are considered commercially confidential.

Approval of this recommendation which fell outside of the S&FCOMM. Terms of Reference was proposed by SH, seconded by SBi. Resolved unanimously.

FC22/065 (IC)

To consider the content of a report from Locum Town Clerk regarding a specific confidential tenancy matter:

After reviewing a Part two briefing report, **a resolution for action by the LTC on behalf of the Town Council was proposed by SL, seconded by Chair and resolved unanimously.**

The details of this proposal are redacted as they relate to a 3rd party and, as such, are considered commercially confidential. LTC: Please action accordingly and report outcomes to Council as soon as possible.

FC22/066 (IC)

To consider a confidential matter pertaining to Town Centre Economic Regeneration which is deemed confidential due to the sensitive nature of the business to be discussed:

Members discussed a matter relating to a building in the town centre (now empty) which had been the subject of much social media "chatter" in recent weeks and which was causing consternation as to its impact on the wider town centre offering and street scene. JW outlined a brief history of the building and the challenges that would be faced in re-letting it to a going concern. It was ultimately agreed that the closure of this particular business and the future use of the building was outside of the remit (and powers) of the Town Council but that the TC would willingly participate and cooperate with 3rd parties to ensure that the building did not fall into disrepair and further exacerbate the problems being experienced on our High Street. Noted

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FC22/051 (IC)

To consider update on Town Council's acquisition of, and the future plans for, the Jubilee Field (recreation area) off Boxfield Road; to consider designs and quotations for the proposed 'Jubilee Arch' at the entrance to the field from Boxfield Road:

It was proposed by JW, seconded by EP, that Council suspend its extant Financial regulations and approve expenditure when only one quote had been obtained; this was due to the complexity of the project and the limited number of contractors able to provide the service/goods. A quote from Contractor A was considered and approved at a value of £850 to create and install a Jubilee Arch at the Boxfield Road entrance to the Jubilee field.

Resolved unanimously.

LTC to liaise with SH and contractor A to place order and make arrangements for arch to be installed as soon as was practicable.

With no further business to deal with, the Chair closed the meeting at 21.25pm.

Signed Date : 11th April 2022