

Axminster Town Council

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

Mayor: Cllr Jill Farrow
Town 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

MINUTES APPROVED 16th May 2022; Part ONE version (Redacted).

Held in person on Monday 11th April 2022 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Farrow (JF) (Chair), Sedgewick (AS) (Vice-Chair), Birnie (SBI.), Bourne (ABO.), Brooker (S) (SBr.), Burrough (KB), Holt (SH), Huskisson (AH), Leat (SL), Mynard (MM), Spurway (MS), Steadman (BS) and Walden (JW) (*Meeting was quorate*).

Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (LTC).
EDDC Councillors, Sarah Jackson and Andrew Moulding.
3 members of the public.

Chair welcomed all in attendance especially Cllr. Mynard who re-joins the Council after an extended period of ill-health. Chair asked all members of the Council to introduce themselves briefly as many had joined the Council since Cllr. Mynard had been absent. 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 their opposition to the previously resolved decision to provide a climbing wall play facility in Raymonds Hill. The speaker highlighted the dangerous road conditions, the speed of traffic on the main access road to the site and their reservations about the installation of Council-funded assets onto privately owned land. Noted. Chair thanked speaker for their contribution. Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.10pm

FC22/067

To note members of committee present:

Attendance at meeting shown above. Chair welcomed newly co-opted Councillor, Andrew Bourne to the meeting.

FC22/068

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

Cllr. Brooker, A (ABr). Absence noted and reason and apology approved (work).

Cllr. Paice (EP) Absence noted and reason and apology approved (ill health).

Proposed by Chair, seconded by MM. Resolved unanimously.

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FC22/069

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

Cllr. Ian Hall (DCC/EDDC) sent his apologies. Noted.

FC22/070

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.

FC22/071

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

Approval of the 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.

FC22/072

i) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 28th March 2022 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes:

Approval of the minutes proposed by Chair, seconded by SBi. Resolved unanimously. Minutes signed by Chair as a true and faithful record of the business of that meeting.

ii) No matters arising.

FC22/073

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 – none held since last FULL Council
 - b) Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held 28/03/2022
 - c) Employment Committee meeting held 21/03/2022
 - d) Employment Committee meeting held 25/03/2022
 - e) Operations Committee – none held since last FULL Council
- All minutes duly noted. No matters arising raised by members.

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FC22/074

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.*

None to be considered. Noted

FC22/075

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.

FC22/076

To consider matters pertaining to Consultations and Reports to Council:

i) To consider a proposal that the Town Council put forward suggestions for a widening of the existing 20mph speed restriction zone in the Town Centre (DCC consultation):

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that the Town Council should apply to DCC and seek an extension of the existing 20mph limit to include:

- a) A358 southbound to "Tesco" roundabout
- b) Stoney Lane (between both schools)
- c) A358 northbound to Millbrook roundabout.

Furthermore, it was proposed that the 30mph speed limit northbound on the A358 be extended to start before the Weycroft bridge crossing (in All Saints parish).

Resolved unanimously. Clerk: please action and respond accordingly.

ii) To consider whether the Town Council wishes to make a formal response to the Cranbrook Expansion Consultation (22/0406/MOUT):

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by BS, that the Town Council should not submit a formal response. Resolved unanimously. No further action necessary.

iii) To consider whether the Town Council wishes to make a formal response to the Devon Carbon Plan consultation:

The Chair spoke to say that the consultation was a lengthy document and that it would be difficult to submit a "collective" response from the Town Council in the timescales available. Chair did suggest that members submit their own responses in a personal capacity. No further action.

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FC22/076

To consider matters pertaining to Consultations and Reports to Council (continued):

iv) To receive a report on the recent East Devon Line Forum meeting held 15th March 2022. Chair and SH had attended online. Two websites were promoted; jurassicbytrain.com and greatscenicrailways.com to encourage use of the East Devon line incorp. Axminster. It was felt to be a useful forum for the Council to participate in. Noted.

FC22/077 i)

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

No further volunteers. Vacancies to remain unfilled for the time being.

FC22/077 ii)

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

JW suggested that members come along to committees in which they might have an interest simply as observers in the first instance, prior to formally joining.

Consequently;

ABo. volunteered to join the Strategy and Finance Committee.

KB volunteered to join the Operations Committee.

SBr. And AH volunteered to join the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

KB, SBi. and BS volunteered to join the Jubilee Field working party.

KB volunteered to join the Communications working party.

SBi. and AB volunteered to join the Signage working party.

FC22/077 iii)

To consider suggestion that Council should establish a Climate Change Action Group (or working party):

AH spoke on this subject and proposed that such a group be established to encourage Axminster to work towards becoming a "Green" town. Links with neighbouring parishes and community organisations could be fostered and encouraged. SH offered his agreement but suggested that the Group be titled the "Sustainability Working Party" and that its aims include tangible outputs and the creation of a Town Council Sustainability Policy.

A query was raised as to whether external parties (such as District and County Councillors, other Council staff etc) could sit on the WP. This was confirmed as entirely acceptable and to be encouraged to bring in a wide range of experiences and skillsets.

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FC22/077 iii)

To consider suggestion that Council should establish a Climate Change Action Group (or working party) (continued):

It was suggested that AH Chair the Working Party when created and that other members be sought to provide the membership and work towards creating Terms of Reference, draft policy etc.

Chair proposed that Standing Orders be suspended to allow Cllr. Sarah Jackson (EDDC) to contribute. Seconded by SH. Resolved.

Cllr. Jackson put forward the suggestion that Catherine Causley (EDDC Climate Change Officer) be approached and asked to contribute and participate.

Chair proposed that Standing Orders be reinstated. Seconded by AS. Resolved.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that the Town Council should seek to establish a Sustainability Working Party, initially chaired by AH. Resolved unanimously.

FC22/078

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

Clerk confirmed that £1200 had been set aside for Community Expenditure (under S.145 LGA1972) as below:

£400 towards exclusive hire of the Guildhall from 2/6 to 5/6 inclusive for QJ22 events

£500 towards Pippins Teddy Bear Picnic event

£300 towards Axminster Conservative Club QJ22 event

Clerk was asked to use our social media channels to promote the availability of town council funding for the celebratory bank holiday period and to keep members informed of applications for reimbursement.

Furthermore, it was proposed by JW, seconded by AS, that the Town Council should purchase a Jubilee Flag (the Jubilee logo on the Union Jack background) to celebrate the event. Resolved unanimously. Clerk duly directed to make such arrangements within the budget set aside previously.

KB offered to liaise with SH regarding potential entertainment and attractions for the Jubilee Field Opening event on 2/6. Noted.

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FC22/079

To receive update on Town Council's acquisition of the Jubilee Field (recreation area) off Boxfield Road, to consider the future plans for the amenity and finally to approve expenditure limits for the works to be undertaken and to agree a scheme of delegation for their execution:

SH updated members on the progress with the re-opening and improvement of the Jubilee Field recreation area. Thanks were offered to Totally Locally (Axminster) for the donated (loan) of three picnic benches for public use for the summer season. ABr. Kindly offered to donate an appropriately sized piece of natural rock with a slate plinth inscription to celebrate the field opening. This was gratefully accepted by all Councillors. SH, ABr. And Clerk to liaise on siting and installation.

It was proposed by SH, seconded by JW, that up to £15,000 be set aside from Council's reserves to cover the costs of the proposed improvements including installation of benches, dog-free zone fencing, creation of hard-standing path around remaining perimeter, installation of noticeboards, additional picnic benches, signage and ongoing grass cutting. Chair proposed an amendment to increase that sum to £20,000 in light of the Council's wishes to make the recreation area "outstanding". This amendment was seconded by JW, and accepted by SH. Resolved unanimously.

Authority to spend within this sum was afforded to Clerk and SH. AS asked that Council promote the field improvements and opening event as much as possible to encourage visitors.

FC22/080

To consider financial matters:

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

RFO (PH) had circulated a schedule of payment for March 2022 to the value of £36595.67.

Payment approval proposed by Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

b) To receive and review RFO financial report for March 2022:

Noted. SH thanked RFO for content and clarity of the report. No questions to RFO.

c) To receive update from RFO as to the arrangements for the completion and submission of the 2021-22 Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR):

Update received from RFO. Date for publication of AGAR return suggested for 1/7/2022 with submission to the External Auditor prior to that date. It was agreed that an Extraordinary meeting of the FULL Council may be necessary towards end of June to allow review and approval of the AGAR3 submission documents. Noted

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FC22/080

To consider financial matters (continued):

d) To receive and consider draft financial reports for the new financial year and to approve the format put forward by the RFO.

Members had reviewed the draft reports provided prior to the meeting by the RFO and, subsequently, **it was proposed by Chair, seconded by JW, that the format of those draft reports be accepted and direction was given to the RFO accordingly. Resolved unan.**

RFO: Please note and action accordingly.

FC22/081

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.

b) To receive update on the recent correspondence between Natural England and EDDC and its impact on development in the Axe Valley catchment area.

Clerk reported on the current situation regarding the recent NE correspondence to EDDC as the Local Planning Authority which served to halt all residential development in the Axe Valley Catchment area. Members commented that the majority of the nutrient loading into the watercourses locally came from agricultural operations and that, consequently, EDDC needed to liaise and cooperate with both the farming community as well as developers. It was also suggested that ATC liaise with the EDDC Neighbourhood Planning Officer to ascertain how this ruling would impact upon the Town Council's ongoing N/Plan process. SL highlighted the impact of this ruling on our own planning comment process.

FC22/082

To receive a report from the Town Clerk on the timing and scheduling of Council and Committee meetings and to reach agreement on changes (if thought appropriate by the Town Council):

Chair proposed that this matter (whilst welcomed for debate) be deferred until later in the year until such time as Council's staffing resources had been strengthened and improved. SH seconded the deferment. Resolved unanimously.

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FC22/082

To receive a report from the Town Clerk on the timing and scheduling of Council and Committee meetings and to reach agreement on changes (if thought appropriate by the Town Council) (continued):

JW noted that there were parallels between this matter and the content of the recently received benchmarking report and that it was a subject that required more in-depth review and discussion between the membership of the Council. Noted.

Subsequently, JW proposed that this matter be brought back before Council in September 2022. Seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and timetable for inclusion on agenda as directed.

FC22/083

To consider a proposal that the Guildhall Churchill Room be renamed “The Jubilee Room”.

Chair wished it noted in the minutes that Council had received a representation from a resident objecting to this proposed renaming. Noted.

It was further noted that the Operations Committee had supported this proposal but had felt that it was a matter for the FULL Council to decide upon.

JW proposed that the room be so renamed in honour of HM The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee in 2022. SH seconded. 11 votes in favour, none against and 2 abstentions (KB/SL).

The proposal was therefore carried.

Clerk was directed to liaise with Guildhall Manager to add a nameplate to the entrance to the room and to liaise with maintenance staff to move items within the room accordingly.

FC22/084

To consider a proposal that Councillors and Officers share a common “corporate” identity when corresponding with the public and with 3rd parties (matters including style, font, font size, logos etc).

As per agenda item FC22/02 (above), it was proposed from the Chair that this matter be deferred until September 2022. Agreed unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action as previously.

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FC22/085

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

The issue of Councillor's "online presence" was discussed following a suggestion from the Clerk and it was proposed from the Chair that members give this matter some thought prior to the issue being discussed again at a future Council meeting. Members were asked to review their website "bio" entry and ensure that the content was current and accurate. It was also suggested that members may wish to encourage a weekly social media post to introduce a member of the Council and encourage more community engagement as a result. The Chair felt that this could be explored further at the future meeting. Noted.

FC22/086

To note recommendations of the Operations Committee meeting held 01/03/2022 and to consider and (if thought fit) to approve expenditure on additional defibrillation equipment throughout the town and parish of Axminster (Public Health Act 1936; S234.)

It was proposed by AS, seconded by SBr., that the Town Council authorise the expenditure of £5300 towards the cost of providing three additional defibrillator units across the town as per the report provided by the Clerk; furthermore, that defibrillator training event be arranged as swiftly as was possible as a community service. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly. Proposed siting locations were: Axminster Railway station, Trinity Square (external) and Millwey Industrial Estate with a 4th AED being purchased to provide a "spare" in case of deployment and loss of service (this unit to be installed at the Guildhall (interior).

FC22/087

To review the effectiveness and delivery of the Annual Parish Meeting held 4th April 2022 and to consider how future events could be arranged, managed and publicised; Cllr. Farrow (as Chair) to speak on this matter.

Chair read correspondence from a member of the public which was critical of the format and content of the recent Annual Parish Meeting. Chair responded, thanking the correspondent for their interest, but rebutting the criticism and highlighting the significant public interest in the event and the positive comments received. Furthermore, Chair spoke warmly as to the purpose of the APM which was to promote Community Help and Engagement in Axminster and that the work of the Town Council was deliberately kept "low-key" to focus public interest on the other business considered. SH supported the Chair's statement and suggested that a different format (time, date, venue etc) could be considered in 2023.

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FC22/087

To review the effectiveness and delivery of the Annual Parish Meeting held 4th April 2022 and to consider how future events could be arranged, managed and publicised; Cllr. Farrow (as Chair) to speak on this matter. (continued):

AS asked that the reports from Committee Chair's be reconsidered at the Annual Meeting of the Council to be held on 9th May. Chair asked Clerk to action this request.

Chair asked that the format and style of the 2023 APM be considered by FULL Council in December 2022. Clerk: Please note and diarise accordingly.

FC22/088

To note the date of the next FULL meeting of the Town Council; 9th May 2022 which would also incorporate the Annual Meeting of the Council. Noted.

FC22/089

AS 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 KB. 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.

* Chair invited Cllr. Sarah Jackson (EDDC) to remain behind to participate in an agenda item below.

Part TWO business to be considered.

Chair proposed that agenda item FC22/096 (IC) be considered as the first Part Two business. Seconded SH. Resolved

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FC22/096 (IC)

To consider the content of a report from Locum Town Clerk regarding a matter pertaining to Public Disorder and Anti-Social behaviour in the Town Centre (this business has been tabled for consideration at the request of the local Police authorities).

SBr. declared a personal interest in this matter due to an association with one of the business operators involved.

After discussion on this matter and taking into account additional information received from the multi-agency group, it was proposed by Chair, seconded by JW, that the Clerk write to the three District Councillors to voice the Council's concerns over the ongoing issues which were having an adverse impact on the town. The three ward members would be asked to undertake their own actions with the relevant officers involved and report back to the Town Council as soon as they were able to. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

Chair thanked Cllr. Jackson for her attendance and participation. Cllr. Jackson left the meeting at this point.

FC22/090 (IC)

To consider a matter pertaining to Council's legal representation and ongoing legal cases which require resolution and decisions from the Council:

Members received a report from the Clerk on this subject. Subsequently, it was proposed by SH, seconded by BS, that this Council would seek to move its legal representation to an alternative legal provider in Exeter for all future legal work required. Resolved unanimously.

It was noted that this firm had declined to take on the ongoing cases and that these would have to be finalised using the Council's existing legal service provider.

FC22/091 (IC)

To consider a request from a commercial organisation to use the Guildhall car park for two events later in the year and that the Town Council make a financial contribution towards a series of connected events within the Guildhall by virtue of s.145 of the Local Government Act 1972:

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by JW, that the Town Council authorise and permit the use of the Guildhall car park for the delivery of the two events requested at no financial cost to either the event organiser or the Guildhall Management Committee but that no financial contribution would be provided by the Town Council towards those events. Resolved unan.

Clerk: Please convey this decision to the Guildhall Manager as a matter of urgency.

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FC22/092 (IC)

To consider a proposal that the Council reassess the financial viability and deliverability of the proposed play area at Raymonds Hill in light of new financial and legal information received by the Council:

The representation from a member of the public earlier in the meeting was noted.

After lengthy debate, it was proposed by JW, seconded by BS, that the Council's support for a climbing wall play installation (and other play items) at Cooks Lane site (Raymonds Hill) be withdrawn in light of unfunded costs for the project, safety concerns for users relating to traffic and lack of pedestrian access along Cooks Lane, opposition from local residents and unresolved legal issues regarding lease of the private site from a 3rd party landowner.

Subsequently, the Council wished for the play amenity spend (£15,000) to be undertaken at the Jubilee Field site (subject to agreement of the S106 officer at EDDC).

Resolved unanimously. Clerk: Please action accordingly.

FC22/093 (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 Clerk on behalf of the Town Council in relation to the delivery of draft Heads of Terms to the tenant's legal representatives was proposed by JW, seconded by SH and resolved unanimously.

Furthermore, it was agreed that when a meeting between the Council and the tenants was convened, the Council should be represented by the Chair, AS, SH, JW and the Clerk.

Additionally, the Clerk was directed to start the legal process of creating draft Heads of Terms for another tenant and SH was asked to liaise with the new legal service provider to create a draft Tenancy at Will for a 3rd tenant.

FC22/094 (IC)

To consider a confidential matter pertaining to the Old Courthouse garden amenity.

It was proposed that the Old Courthouse bandstand gazebo be dismantled on safety grounds as a matter of some urgency and stored safely until repairs could be effected and that, additionally, the wooden base to the bandstand be dismantled and disposed of, again on safety grounds. Proposed by Chair, seconded by SBi. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

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FC22/095 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to quotations for grounds maintenance works throughout the town (deemed commercially confidential in relation to the quotes being reviewed).

This item was deferred until a later meeting by the Chair as no quotations were yet available to be considered. Noted.

With no further business to deal with, the Chair closed the meeting at 21.50pm.

Signed Date : 16th May 2022

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