

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 Strategy & Finance Committee.

MINUTES APPROVED 30th May 2022; Part ONE Minutes (Redacted)

Held in person on Monday 25th April 2022 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Farrow (JF) (Chair), Sedgewick (AS) (Vice-Chair), Birnie (SBI.), Burrough (KB), Holt (SH), Leat (SL), Spurway (MS) and Walden (JW). (*Meeting was declared as quorate*).
Town Clerk, Paul Hayward. One member of the public in attendance.

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.

No public representations. Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.05pm

SF 22/043

To note members of committee present:

Attendance at meeting shown above.

SF 22/044

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

Cllr. Brooker (A). Absence and reason (Work) noted and apology/reason approved.

Proposed by Chair, seconded by JW, that this apology for absence be approved and absence noted. Resolved unanimously.

SF 22/045

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

None.

Continued overleaf.

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

SF 22/046

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.

Councillors represented the Guildhall Management Committee declared their personal interests.

At the FULL Council meeting held 14/02/2022, Cllr. Farrow was afforded a dispensation* to discuss and vote upon matters pertaining to parish allotments. This dispensation applies until May 2023 (unless rescinded prior to that date) and is afforded in respect of Cllr. Farrow's disclosable pecuniary interests as set out in the Register of Members Interests.

* *Localism Act 2011 (s.33)*

SF 22/047

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the S&FComm. meeting held on 28th March 2022 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes:

Approval of minutes proposed by Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

No matters arising. Chair signed the minutes as a true and accurate record of that meeting.

SF 22/048

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.

SF 22/049

To consider matters pertaining to Council's Risk Management and Assessment (RMA) procedure/protocol:

a) To receive update on progress with the 2022-23 RMA workplan and to agree timetable for review and completion.

Update received and SH asked that this matter remain as a standing item on the SFCOMM agenda so that work on the RMA could be completed throughout the next 12 months to ensure compliance in accordance with the Annual Governance and Accountability Regulations. Furthermore, that all future OPSCOMM and FULL Council agendas make reference to the consideration of Council's RMA process accordingly. Agreed and noted.

Continued overleaf.

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

SF22/050

To consider matters pertaining to Financial matters:

a) To receive update on the Council's Annual Return (AGAR) submission for 21-22, to note timetable for completion and progression with internal & external auditing arrangements.

Clerk provided a report which set out the suggested timetable for AGAR completion and submission in liaison with the Internal and External Auditors. Draft AGAR3 documents are to be presented to SFCOMM in May 2022 with the possibility of an Extraordinary FULL Council meeting in late June to review and, if thought fit, approve the AGAR submission post-Internal Auditing review via Thomas Westcott audit.

b) To consider initial virements between/into earmarked reserves as a result of the 21-22 financial year out-turn position; RFO to provide report to members of committee.

These suggested virements had not yet been calculated/determined due to ongoing staffing resource issues and the finalisation of the 21-22 accounts. Chair suggested that this matter be deferred until further information was available from RFO. Agreed and noted.

c) To consider the specific creation of an earmarked "Contested Election" reserve fund to safeguard the Town Council against unforeseen and unbudgeted election expenditure.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that the sum of £8000 be vired into an earmarked reserve within Council's accounts to provide funding for any unanticipated election costs to the Council in the future. Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please note and create reserve accordingly and include within future financial reports.

d) To consider a report on the availability of Section 106 / CIL funding to the Town Council for amenity and service projects within the Axminster Parish and to agree forward plan for reporting and acquisition of said funds to prevent any potential losses due to failure to meet spending deadlines.

After discussion on the funds available and the geographic constraints attached to that funding availability, it was proposed by Chair that a recommendation be put to FULL Council that £137,488.72 S106 for Millwey Rise Play Improvements be used to create a separate infant/inclusive and accessible play facility adjacent to the existing play area. This facility would have to be delivered in conjunction, and cooperation, with EDDC as they were the landowner. It was noted that there was likely to be a time constraint for the spend of these funds and that this was consequently a matter of some urgency. The lack of staffing resource within the Town Council was also acknowledged. Clerk was directed to start a dialogue with EDDC as to the deliverability and affordability of such a scheme prior to the consideration of this recommendation at the next available FULL Council meeting. Noted.

Continued overleaf.

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

SF 22/051

To consider whether Axminster Town Council should seek to achieve accreditation under the NALC Quality Award Scheme (Foundation level):

Members of the committee received a report from the Clerk.

It was subsequently proposed by the Chair, seconded by AS, that the Council should “in principle” seek accreditation under this scheme but that, mindful of staffing pressures, this matter should be deferred until September 2022 whereupon the Clerk should make a further presentation to FULL Council outlining the costs, advantages, disadvantages etc. whereupon the entire membership could consider the matter and vote accordingly. Resolved unan.

Clerk: Please note and action/diarise accordingly.

SF 22/052

To consider whether Axminster Town Council should procure Asset Management/ Play Inspection software for the improved governance & administration of both responsibilities:

Clerk presented a verbal report to members on his investigations and research in this regard. Members felt that the costs proposed required further justification and asked Clerk to prepare a briefing report for consideration by the FULL membership of the Council at the next opportunity explaining why the spend was necessary and proportionate to Council’s needs in this respect. Proposed by Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

SF 22/053

To consider whether Axminster Town Council should offer a “Livestreaming” service for all Council meetings for the wider benefit of residents of Axminster parish unable to attend said meetings; to further consider costs and staff resourcing to enable such activity to be undertaken:

Chair suggested that this matter be considered at a later part of the year due to the staffing issues already covered above. Members were in agreement that the “principle” of hybrid access to meetings (both physical and virtual) was to be welcomed and encouraged given the popularity and improvements in community engagement via that method, but they recognised that the Clerk would be unable to deliver such hybrid access (and IT requirement) within his current role. It was agreed that this matter should be parked until Council was fully staffed once again. Clerk: Please note and add to future agenda of FULL Council.

Continued overleaf.

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

SF 22/054

To consider update on the creation of the Axminster Town Council Strategic Plan for 2022-27:

AS offered to recirculate the draft Strategic Plan for Axminster Town Council to all members and asked Chair to agree to this matter being discussed at FULL Town Council meeting at the earliest opportunity. Agreed by Chair. Noted.

SF 22/055

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

None raised by Chair.

The Chair proposed that Standing Orders be suspended to permit representations from a 3rd party (Chair of the Guildhall Management Committee) who had been invited to participate in the debate on the following agenda item in Part Two – SF22/057(IC). Seconded by MS. Resolved unanimously.

SF 22/056

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. MS seconded the proposal. Resolved.

Part ONE recording was stopped at this point and the meeting moved into Part TWO (Confidential) session whereupon recording was resumed.

Continued overleaf.

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

SF 22/057 (IC)

To consider a report from the Town Clerk relating to the maintenance, repair and improvements to the Guildhall building and to consider any appropriate actions relating to the extant lease between the Town Council and the Guildhall Management Committee(GMC):

Chair of the Committee (JF) invited the Chair of the Guildhall Management Committee (MD) to speak on this matter.

There is a desire to modernise the legal structure of the Guildhall and provide some clear clarity and knowledge of who owns what, who is responsible for what, and who pays when something goes wrong. Also an acceptance that a scheme deed from the 1960's does not allow for a modern, efficient and economically sustainable operation of a modern entertainment venue and that some much more could potentially be achieved with a fresh outlook. It was also noted that the original holding trustees may not all be alive and that adds another level of uncertainty and confusion to the entire consideration and debate.

It was accepted that GMC will need to increase its reliance on grant funding to deliver better facilities in the future and the Town Council had already considered a "shopping list" of projects that would improve the building but which, as yet, were unfunded. The Council was also reluctant to press ahead with some major structural improvements until it understood how they would be paid for in the long term; again, the uncertainty over the current legal framework and composition of the relationship between GMC and ATC was a barrier to future growth and prosperity.

After further debate, it was proposed by SH and seconded by AS that; 1) a proposal be placed on the next FULL Council agenda seeking the agreement of the FULL Council that legal advice should be urgently sought to review, modernise and improve the 1967 Scheme Deed/Legal Form of the GMC; 2) that the Council should seek to once again consider whether the retention and operation of the Guildhall building (as an asset to the town) was in the best interests of the residents of Axminster; 3) to recommend to FULL Council that the S&FCOMM is supportive of the plans to seek a review of the Scheme Deed with the ownership of the building reverting back to the Town Council if that was the most efficient and legally sensible option (following said legal advice received). This proposal was resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please add to next FULL agenda for discussion and decision.

KB thanked MD for attending and participating in this important debate. In turn, MD thanked all Councillors and Officers for their continued support and their agreement to consider this issue in light of its profound importance to the town and surrounding parishes.

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

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

SF 22/057 (IC)

To consider a report from the Town Clerk relating to the maintenance, repair and improvements to the Guildhall building and to consider any appropriate actions relating to the extant lease between the Town Council and the Guildhall Management Committee (GMC) (continued):

Clerk provided a further report on ongoing maintenance and repair issues following recent site inspections by 3rd party contractors and assessors. The outcome of these reports was noted and the risks recognised by members of the committee but they felt unable to approve any of the works proposed (other than those which had previously been approved but not yet executed) given the uncertainty referred to above.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that the Committee note the risks outlined in the Clerk's report and that they wished it minuted that where risks were deemed to be immediate or likely to cause safety issues to visitors, guests, members and staff, the Clerk be duly delegated to arrange any such works as necessary to mitigate or remove said risk. However, it should also be noted that Council was actively working towards these improvements and that such actions were evidence that the risks had been identified, acknowledged and, that where possible, measures put in place to address them. Resolved unanimously.

SF 22/058 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to building tenancies and hires; to receive report from Town Clerk on ongoing tenancy matters and consider future leases/licences and revisions thereof in light of recent legal advice received by the Council:

Town Clerk provided a further report to members in relation to the ongoing tenancy matter.

As a result of this report, and the consequent member discussion, a recommendation was proposed regarding a way forward and authority delegated to the Clerk to execute this in accordance with Committee's wishes. This recommendation would require the agreement of the FULL Council. The nature, and content, of the recommendation is deemed confidential as it relates to legal, financial and tenancy matters pertaining to a 3rd party.

Continued overleaf.

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

SF 22/058 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to building tenancies and hires; to receive report from Town Clerk on ongoing tenancy matters and consider future leases/licences and revisions thereof in light of recent legal advice received by the Council (continued):

Clerk was given authority to liaise with our legal representatives to issue these amended Heads of Terms and to seek response from the tenant.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly with utmost urgency. Please report back to Council when any correspondence or communication received from the 3rd party or their legal team.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 9.00pm.

Signed Date 30th May 2022

Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy & Finance Committee.

MINUTES APPROVED 30th May 2022; Part ONE Minutes (Redacted)

Held in person on Monday 25th April 2022 at 7.00 p.m.