

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 27th June 2022; Part ONE version (Redacted).

Held in person on Monday 16th May 2022 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Farrow (JF) (Chair), Sedgewick (AS) (Vice-Chair), Birnie (SBI.), Bourne (ABO.), Brooker (A) (ABR.), Brooker (S) (SBR.), Huskisson (AH), Leat (SL), Paice (EP), Spurway (MS), Steadman (BS) and Walden (JW) (*Meeting was quorate*).

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

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

FC22/098

To note members of committee present:

Attendance at meeting shown above.

FC22/099

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

Cllr. Burrough. Absence noted and reason and apology approved (conflicting engagement).

Cllr. Holt. Absence noted and reason and apology approved (conflicting engagement).

Proposed by JW, seconded by MS. Resolved unanimously.

FC22/100

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

Cllr. Mynard. Absent. Noted.

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

Continued overleaf.

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FC22/101

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.

SBi. declared a personal interest in agenda item 22/106f) as a member of Plastic Free Axminster. Noted. The dispensation afforded to Cllr. Farrow (14/02/2022) was also noted.

FC22/102

i) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the FULL Council meeting held on 11th April 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) Matters arising from those minutes: It was noted that the draft minutes of the Annual Meeting held 9th May 2022 would be considered for approval on the 13th June as these were not available for this meeting.

iii) To note the minutes of the committee meetings listed below and to consider any matters arising:

- a) Planning Committee meeting - None held since last FULL Council
- b) Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held 25/04/2022
- c) Employment Committee meeting - None held since last FULL Council
- d) Operations Committee meeting held 12/04/2022
- e) Operations Committee meeting held 03/05/2022

All minutes duly noted. No matters arising from members of the Council.

FC22/103

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.*

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SL, that the recommendation of the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held 25/04/2022 (22/050d) be approved. Resolved unanimously.

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FC22/104

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.

FC22/105

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

Expenditure reimbursement claims (to date) noted. ABr. kindly updated members as to the progress with the donation of the commemorative stone plinth. Clerk updated members as to forthcoming Jubilee Field launch event. Concerns noted regarding availability of contractors for works on the field.

FC22/106

To consider Council's financial matters:

a) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve payments for April 2022 (£86286.18)

Financial report circulated to members before meeting.

Chair proposed payment of accounts due for April. Seconded by AS. Resolved unanimously.

b) To receive, and note, Responsible Financial Officer's Report and financial pack for April 2022 in the new standardised format. Members to approve publication of a suitably redacted copy of these reports online in accordance with Transparency Code guidelines.

Noted. JW thanked RFO for content and clarity of the new style reports, echoed by Chair.

It was agreed that a summary of the financial reports be published each month for public access and in the interests of transparency. Noted.

c) Questions to the RFO on these accounts/financial reports.

None raised.

d) To note the dates for the publication of the Notice period for the exercise of Public Rights for the financial period 2021-22; recommendation from RFO is that Council approve the date range 1/7/2022 to 11/8/2022 (ie. 30 working days).

Noted. Chair welcomed the opportunity for members of the public to scrutinise Council's business and financial transactions, again in the interests of openness and transparency.

e) To consider proposal to meet (pro-rata) the Clerk's membership costs for the SLCC (Society of Local Council Clerks) for 2023.

JW proposed payment of £308 (pro-rata) in respect of these professional fees. Seconded by Chair. Resolved unanimously.

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FC22/106

To consider Council's financial matters (continued):

f) To consider a grant application from PLASTIC FREE AXMINSTER - £550
SBI. had earlier declared a personal interest in this matter.

JW proposed that the grant be awarded as the project was a positive force for good in the town. Seconded by BS. Resolved 11 votes for, 0 against and 1 abstention (SBI.).

RFO: Please make this payment as soon as possible.

FC22/107

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).

i) [22/0663/FUL](#) – Millbrook Farmhouse, Chard Road. Axminster. EX13 5EG
Construction of single storey detached annexe.

Council to be mindful of current Natural England direction to the LPA (EDDC).

It was proposed by SL, seconded by JW, that the following consultee comment be submitted to the LPA; that the Town Council would wish to support this application but notes the recent Natural England guidance to EDDC in respect of residential development in the Axe Valley catchment area and that Council recognises the impact of that guidance on planning development. Resolved unanimously.

ii) [22/0851/FUL](#) – Axe Valley Academy, Chard Street. Axminster. EX13 5EA
Installation of telecoms cabin and erection of surrounding fence compound.

It was proposed by SL, seconded by EP, that the Town Council supports this application. Resolved unanimously.

iii) [22/0875/FUL](#) – Symonds Down House, Woodbury Lane, Axminster. EX13 5TL
Erection of a two-storey garage to include 1st floor music studio.

Council to be mindful of current Natural England direction to the LPA (EDDC).

It was proposed by SL, seconded by BS, that the following consultee comment be submitted to the LPA; that the Town Council would wish to support this application but notes the recent Natural England guidance to EDDC in respect of residential development in the Axe Valley catchment area and that Council recognises the impact of that guidance on planning development. Resolved unanimously.

iv) [22/0932/FUL](#) – Symonds Down House, Woodbury Lane, Axminster. EX13 5TL
Erection of single-storey oak-framed garden room to rear

It was proposed by SL, seconded by SBr., that the Town Council supports this application. Resolved unanimously.

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FC22/107

To consider planning matters (continued):

v) [22/0867/FUL](#) – 1 Church Street, Axminster. EX13 5AQ

Erection of a lean-to shed to the side of the house.

It was proposed by SL, seconded by EP, that the Town Council supports this application. Resolved unanimously.

b) To ratify planning decisions (as below) made previously under Council's delegated authority (as agreed in consultation between Planning Committee members, Chair of Planning Committee and Clerk): **Ratification proposed by Chair, seconded by JW.**

Resolved unanimously.

i) *22/0016/ADV – Axminster Guildhall, West Street, Axminster. EX13 5NX*

Installation of 6 no. A1 poster frames to external front elevation.

The Town Council declined to submit a comment on this application in light of conflicts of interest.

ii) *22/0357/FUL – Lyme Tree House, Crewkerne Road, Axminster. EX13 5SX*

Retaining of wall and extension of the driveway.

The Town Council supported this application.

iii) *22/0593/TRE – Westering, Crewkerne Road, Axminster. EX13 5TE*

T1 Beech Tree to raise epicormic growth up to 4m to allow light into garden.

Cuts > 15cm. The Town Council supported this application.

c) To consider correspondence from resident regarding a purportedly dangerous structure in the parish and to agree upon action(s) (if any) to be taken by the Town Council.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by BS, that the Town Council approach EDDC ward members and seek to arrange a joint meeting at the correspondent's property to discuss their concerns and determine a plan of action. Clerk to arrange accordingly.

d) To consider any decisions/determinations:

See supplementary schedule published with all determinations listed 4th April to 4th May 2022.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SL, that this item of business be removed from future Council and Planning Committee agendas on the basis that the information is readily available via the EDDC Planning (Portal) website. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please note.

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Council Business to be considered:

FC22/108

To consider a request from a parishioner that the Town Council host (and fund) a “Charity Fayre” at the Guildhall in December to promote and publicise the community works undertaken in the town by local groups and organisations:

After discussion, and a general agreement that such an event was to be encouraged in the spirit of promoting, and recognising, the value of volunteering and charitable groups in the town, it was suggested that this matter be re-considered in September, whereby the Council’s staffing levels would be (hopefully) at full strength. Agreed by all. Noted.

Clerk: please add to September 2022 FULL Council meeting agenda.

FC22/109

To consider a request from the Chamber of Commerce that the Town Council consider a jointly organised “Proud of Axminster [Anti-litter]” Campaign in the run up to the Queen’s Jubilee celebrations in June.

It was agreed that Council would be keen to support such an event but Council members recognised that current staffing issues would pose a problem in terms of direct involvement or organisation. Chair suggested that the Chamber of Commerce and/or Plastic Free Axminster might wish to step up to make the arrangements and that the Council could support the event via a contribution related to the QJ22 celebrations, budgeted expenditure having already agreed upon and resolved at an earlier meeting of the Council. Noted.

Clerk: Please liaise with Chamber/PFA accordingly.

FC22/110

To receive an update on the ongoing work of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group; Cllr. Sedgewick to present her report.

Report presented by AS. Work continues on the N/Plan steadily and AS thanked David Knapman (and other non-Council members) for their time and efforts in that regard. The first draft had been submitted to EDDC and had been returned with edits and requests for clarification. These were being addressed. On the 24th of May, Angela King (EDDC officer) was coming to Axminster for a walkabout and group forum discussion. AS asked that some improvements be made to the Town Council website to better promote the N/Plan project progress. No dates had yet been set for the creation of the 2nd (revised) draft, but members of the steering group were hopeful for mid-Summer.

Chair thanked AS for her dedication and efforts in this matter. Echoed by all Councillors.

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FC22/111

At the Chair's direction; to consider the question; "Should the Town Council maintain the ownership and operation of the Guildhall in the future for the purposes of providing civic and entertainment facilities for the town of Axminster and the surrounding parishes?"

After debate, **it was proposed by Chair, seconded by JW, that the Council should maintain the ownership and operation of the Guildhall for the reasons set out above. Resolved unanimously.**

Chair reminded all present that progress was being made with the revision of the governing documents and legal forms that set out the relationship between the Town Council and the Guildhall Management Committee and that the outcome of that project would be of great benefit to Axminster in the longer term, and also to the financial security of the GMC charity. (the next agenda item is directly related to this one).

FC22/112

In light of the recommendation made at the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held on 25th April 2022, it is proposed that the Town Council should progress as quickly as possible with the review, revision and modernisation of the existing 1967 Axminster Guildhall (charitable) Scheme Deed and associated governance and administration.

Chair proposed suspension of the Council's Standing Orders to permit representation from a non-member of the Council. Resolved unanimously.

Chair invited Mr. Tim Leat to speak on this matter.

Mr. Leat spoke on the history of the Guildhall Management Committee (GMC), and the Guildhall building itself, and confirmed that the (management) trustees of the GMC had agreed that it would be in the best interests of the charity to seek a dissolution of the charity in its existing (somewhat antiquated) form and be re-created as a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) with a revised (and modern) constitution which removed any element of "personal" liability from the management trustees. Furthermore, the creation of a legally binding, specific, property lease between the Council and the GMC was also considered prudent and necessary given the history of the building and the maintenance issues which both parties were acutely aware of. Chair thanked TL for his contribution.

It was subsequently proposed by the Chair, seconded by EP, that the Town Council should instruct its legal representatives (on the basis of the [commercially sensitive and confidential] quote received and circulated to members) to begin the creation of a new CIO and the dissolution of the existing GMC charity (300749) and, in addition, the creation of a new lease for the Guildhall building, with the Town Council as landlord, and the new CIO as tenant.

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FC22/112

In light of the recommendation made at the Strategy and Finance Committee meeting held on 25th April 2022, it is proposed that the Town Council should progress as quickly as possible with the review, revision and modernisation of the existing 1967 Axminster Guildhall (charitable) Scheme Deed and associated governance and administration (continued).

The terms of such a lease would be considered by Council once a draft Heads of Terms document had been created by the legal representative and brought back before Council for due consideration and review. Clerk was directed to liaise with the legal team accordingly and was to be afforded delegated powers to proceed in this regard (unless further expenditure was identified). Resolved unanimously. Noted.

FC22/113

To consider progress with the formulation and preparation of the Council's Strategic Plan (SP) (medium to long-term); Cllr. Sedgewick to present a report on this subject.

AS outlined progress with the Council's current ongoing Strategic Plan.

It was acknowledged that staffing pressures were proving challenging in completing some of the projects and goals identified but it was hoped that this would be resolved in the very near future. AS offered to draft a revised SP to be circulated to all members in conjunction with the Clerk but it was agreed that some aspects of the plan would have to be deferred until the Council was at full operational administrative capacity. Noted.

FC22/114

To consider any matters considered as urgent by presiding Chair that relate to Council's ongoing Risk Assessment Management (RAM) strategy/policy.

This matter was ordinarily considered by the Strategy and Finance Committee (and any recommendations brought before Council accordingly) but it had been agreed by the Chair that this become a standing item on future FULL Council agendas in order to ensure a "belt and braces" approach to RAM matters as the Council moved forward. Noted.

Nothing further to be discussed or considered at this stage.

FC22/115

To consider any training requirements for the forthcoming year that Councillors or employees might wish to be considered for.

Members were in agreement that training opportunities were to be welcomed for members and employees alike and Chair suggested that any member of the Council who wished to avail themselves of such training should contact the Clerk in the first instance. Noted.

Clerk: Please note and assist members as and when required in this respect.

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FC22/116

To note the resignation of Neil Parish (MP for Tiverton and Honiton constituency) and to consider impact on the Council and the town and to consider arrangements for the forthcoming by-election.

Noted. Chair (nor Clerk) were aware of the date of the proposed by-election at this stage but would ensure that it was well-publicised as and when details were released by the Returning Officer for the Tiverton and Honiton constituency. Chair thanked Mr. Parish for his work in the area during his term of office and noted that a great many residents would be saddened by the suddenness (and circumstances) of his resignation.

FC22/117

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

No decisions can be made on matters raised at this point of the meeting, but discussion of such matters is permissible. Any proposals suggested would be added to a future meeting agenda.

Cllr. Hall (DCC) had contacted the Highways Agency regarding the issues at the Zebra crossing on the A358 Chard Road and that progress was being made to resolve that issue. Noted with thanks by Chair.

Chair stated that she was due to attend an event on the 18th of May at the Axminster Inn (as the Mayor) to recognise their recent CAMRA award and the Chair invited all members to attend if they were able to.

Clerk reported that the Axe Valley Ring and Ride group had formally written to the Council to thank them for their recent grant award which was gratefully received. Noted.

FC22/118

To note the date of the next FULL meeting of the Town Council; 13th June 2022.

Noted.

FC22/119

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 Chair. Resolved.

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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.

FC22/120 (IC)

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

SF22/058 (IC) Strategy and Finance Committee recommendation from Part Two 25/04/2022; Tenancy Matter

OC22/120 (IC) Operations Committee recommendation from Part Two 03/05/2022; Tenancy Matter

Members considered a further Part Two (confidential) report from the Clerk in respect of these two conjoined matters. After debate, **it was proposed by JW, seconded by SBi., that the Clerk, the Chair and the Vice-Chair (with SH as substitute) be duly delegated to take action in this regard. Resolved unanimously.** Details of this matter are redacted due to the commercially sensitive nature of the business under consideration.

On the subject of the second tenancy matter, **it was proposed by JW, seconded by BS, that this should be completed without delay for the benefit of both parties. Delegated authority was afforded to the Clerk and SH to proceed with the creation and completion of the two tenancy agreements. Resolved unanimously.** Details of this matter are redacted due to the commercially sensitive nature of the business under consideration.

FC22/121 (IC)

To consider proposal that the Town Council purchase “off-the-shelf” Asset Management and Play Inspection Software; to consider quotes for the software.

RFO presented a report to Council outlining the justification for such software acquisition in the interests of greater operational delivery for Council’s assets and areas of responsibility and to provide another level of assurance for Council’s Risk Management Assessments.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by JW, that the Council should proceed at the price quoted of (redacted due to commercial sensitivity) with that price frozen for 24 months (subject to renewal). Resolved unanimously.

Chair thanked RFO for researching and identifying this software and looked forward to seeing the results of the data upload and task management/tracking system in operation.

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With no further business to deal with, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.30pm.

Signed Date: 27th June 2022

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

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