

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 27th June 2022; Part ONE Minutes (Redacted)

Held in person on Monday 30th May 2022 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Farrow (JF) (Chair), Sedgewick (AS) (Vice-Chair), Birnie (SBi.), Bourne (ABo.), Burrough (KB), Leat (SL), Spurway (MS) and Walden (JW).

(Meeting was declared as quorate).

Town Clerk, Paul Hayward. No members 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 22/059

To elect a Chair of the Strategy & Finance Committee:

Cllr. Farrow (JF) relinquished the Chair to AS for the consideration of this agenda item.
AS called for nominations.

**JW nominated JF. JF accepted the nomination. No further nominations. Seconded SL.
Resolved, 7 votes for, 0 against, 1 abstention.**

JF resumed the Chair.

SF 22/060

To elect a Vice-chair of the Strategy & Finance Committee:

Chair called for nominations.

**Chair nominated AS. AS accepted the nomination. No further nominations. Seconded JW.
Resolved, 7 votes for, 0 against, 1 abstention.**

SF 22/061

To note members of committee present:

Attendance at meeting shown above.

Continued overleaf.

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SF 22/062

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.

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

Proposed by Chair, seconded by JW, that these apologies for absence be approved and absences noted. Resolved unanimously.

SF 22/063

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

Cllr. Steadman (non-member of Committee) had sent her apologies for absence. Noted.

SF 22/064

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 22/065

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the S&FComm. meeting held on 25th April 2022 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes:

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

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

SF 22/066

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.

Continued overleaf.

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SF 22/067

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 noted. No further action at this time.

SF22/068

To consider matters pertaining to Finance:

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 updated Committee as to progress with internal audit progression and asked that members note the amended Asset Register (as circulated). Noted accordingly.

b) To note Council's financial position as at 30/4/2022 and to question the RFO on financial matters if members so wish.

Noted. Question from JW regarding specific reserves which was answered by RFO to JW's satisfaction. No further questions to RFO.

c) To consider proposal that the Monthly Financial Summary report be published on the public access section of the Town Council's website in the interests of openness and transparency.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by MS, that the Monthly Financial Summary report be published for public scrutiny. Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please action accordingly.

d) To consider depositing a further £7,000 with Cambridge Bank to reduce the risks of unprotected deposits in accordance with the Council's adopted Investment/Deposit Policy.

This motion was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS with the amendment that the combined overall deposit be placed with Cambridge Bank as a 1yr fixed term deposit. Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please action accordingly.

SF22/069

To consider whether Axminster Town Council wishes to appoint a representative (and a substitute) to the EDDC Arts and Culture Forum which meets 3 or 4 times per annum.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by AS, that Cllr. Burrough (KB) be appointed as the Town Council's representative on this forum group. Resolved unanimously.

Furthermore, it was proposed by JW, seconded by AS, that JF be appointed as the Town Council's substitute member on this forum group. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please notify EDDC accordingly and seek copies of the agenda for the next meeting of this forum.

Continued overleaf.

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SF22/070

To receive update on progress with the Guildhall/GMC 'governance and legal form' project; RFO to present to members.

RFO presented his report to members. It was recognised that this was a long-overdue and challenging administrative and legal project but one which would resolve a great many issues and difficulties relating to the use of the Guildhall building, its day-to-day operation and the longer term governance and H&S responsibilities.

Chair thanked Clerk for his work on this project and asked that Council be kept informed of progress as and when necessary, asking the Clerk to maintain pressure on the legal representatives commissioned to deliver the required outcomes sooner rather than later given the urgency of a great many other related projects that hinged on the completion of the primary project. Noted.

SF22/071

To consider whether Axminster Town Council should adopt the revised EDDC Code of Conduct Policy and protocols.

It was proposed from the Chair that this matter be deferred to FULL Council at the next possible opportunity for their consideration and decision. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

SF22/072

To consider any matters considered as urgent by presiding Chair for discussion or notation only.

Chair highlighted the forthcoming QJ22 Civic Event at the Church (thereafter at the Guildhall) on 5th June 2022 and invited as many Councillors as were able to attend. Noted.

Clerk was asked to liaise with the Admin. Assistant to ensure that Council name-badges or lanyards were available for all Councillors. Noted.

SF 22/073

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. JW 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.

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SF 22/074 (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. Noted.

This matter is deemed confidential as it both pertains to a 3rd party and also relates to financial information considered commercially sensitive.

SF22/075 (IC)

To consider whether the Town Council should seek to be included within the Sidmouth Town Council collaborative IRF (Innovation Resilience Fund) (EDDC) Tourism Strategy and to consider the financial implications of such inclusion and the cost vs benefit models; RFO to provide a report to members.

This matter is deemed confidential as it both pertains to a 3rd party and also relates to financial information considered commercially sensitive.

After discussion of the financial implications of the involvement at this late stage of the project, and the likely cost vs benefit ratio, **it was proposed by Chair, seconded by JW, that the Town Council should NOT seek to be included within the Sidmouth Town Council collaborative IRF Tourism Strategy (bid). Resolved unanimously.**

Clerk: Please convey this decision to both Sidmouth TC and to the EDDC IRF/Economy team as a matter of utmost urgency given the pressing deadline for the IRF bid submission.

SF22/076 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to the EDDC Axe Valley Levelling Up Bid and the recent stakeholder meeting relating to the DCC Urban Renewal project; Cllr. Sedgewick to speak on this matter supported by the Clerk/RFO.

This matter is deemed confidential as it both pertains to a 3rd party and also relates to financial information considered commercially sensitive.

Members received a report from the RFO/Clerk on the proposed EDDC/DCC Levelling Up Fund bid for the Axe Valley which sought to attract some £15m of central government funding into the Axe Valley economic area, with Axminster being the recipient of a portion of these funds towards the costs of creating new employment centre to provide new jobs in the town.

It was proposed by AS, seconded by JW that:

i) The Council support the bid whilst recognising that elements relating to the town centre public realm improvements included within the bid were likely to require intensive public consultation around the use of the area proposed.

Continued overleaf.

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ii) That the Chair, AS and the Clerk be duly delegated to prepare a letter of support to EDDC (under the Chair's signature) for the bid submission and that a copy of that letter be forwarded to the winner of the Tiverton and Honiton by-election, to be announced on 24th June.

iii) That SH be put forward as the Town Council's representative on the nascent Axminster Regeneration Board as he was already acting as the Council's representative on the Chamber of Commerce. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

SF22/077 (IC)

To consider two grant applications from Community groups for financial grant assistance.

This matter is deemed confidential as it both pertains to 3rd parties and also relates to financial information considered commercially sensitive.

i) Application from Nourish Axminster. £2000

Chair declared a "directly related" Non-registrable Interest as her partner was on the Executive Body of this group, and left the meeting. AS assumed the Chair.

It was proposed by JW, seconded by SBi, that this grant be awarded. Resolved unanimously.

JF returned to the meeting and resumed the Chair.

i) Application from Waffle Community Gardening Group. £3400

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by JW, that a decision on this grant be deferred to allow further information to be sought and to allow time for the applicant to resubmit application on the correct Community Grant application form. Resolved unanimously.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.25pm.

Signed Date: 27th June 2022

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