

# Axminster Town Council

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

Mayor: Cllr Jill Farrow  
Town Clerk: Paul Hayward

[www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk)



THE GUILDHALL  
WEST STREET  
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## Axminster Town Council:

### Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy & Finance Committee 7pm

**MINUTES APPROVED 27/02/2023; Part ONE Minutes (redacted)**

**Held in person on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023. Meeting started at 7.00 p.m.**

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

*(Meeting was declared as quorate).*

Town Clerk, Paul Hayward. Council Administrator.

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.*

#### **Public Forum session.**

No public representations.

No members of the committee wished to speak in public forum.

As such, Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.05pm

#### **SF 22/089R**

**To note members of committee present:**

Attendance at meeting shown above.

#### **SF 22/090R**

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

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

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

#### **SF 22/091R**

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

None.

*Continued overleaf.*

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## SF 22/092R

**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.*

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

The dispensations afforded to Cllr. Burrough & Cllr. Farrow (27/06/2022) were noted.

The dispensation afforded to Cllr. Birnie (12/12/2022) was noted.

No other declarations of interest put forward by members.

It was noted that members present also declared Other Registrable Interests in light of their dual roles as Trustees of the Guildhall Management Committee.

## SF 22/093R

**To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the S&FComm. meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> June 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 22/094R

**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.

## SF22/095R

### **Business to be considered:**

#### **a) To consider first draft of Council's revised Standing Orders.**

Three edits were made to the draft version prepared by the Proper Officer and reviewed by members of the committee prior to the meeting.

*Subsequently, it was proposed by the AS, seconded by KB, that these substantive revised minutes be approved, and that a recommendation be put forward to FULL Council to adopt at the earliest opportunity. Resolved unanimously.*

Clerk: Please action accordingly and add to January FULL agenda.

*Continued overleaf.*

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## **b) To consider first draft of Council's revised Financial Regulations.**

After lengthy review and discussion on the draft financial regulations, numerous amendments were proposed & agreed upon and, as such, Chair proposed that approval of the substantive final document be deferred to the next meeting of the committee to allow time for the Proper Officer to edit, collate and renumber the regulations. Resolved unanimously.

## **c) To consider initial report from RFO on Council's Risk Management & Assessment Review.**

This item was deferred until the next meeting of this committee to allow time for further work to be undertaken on completion and collation of the risk data. Noted.

## **d) To consider updated and revised Strategic Forward Plan and to amend/edit as necessary.**

This item was deferred until the next meeting of this committee to allow time for further work to be undertaken on completion and collation of the plan format and content. It was noted that it might be necessary to delay the final approval of the new Forward Plan until after the May 2023 elections so that the newly elected administration was not unduly constrained by the decisions of the outgoing administration.

## **e) To consider Council's Budget and Precept Statement (and calculation) for FY2023-24 and to agree a recommendation for FULL Council on 16/01/2023 having given due consideration to Council's forecast general reserves position and anticipated income and expenditure for FY2023-24.**

After considerable discussion and debate, which took into account the current national (and local) cost of living crisis, the financial pressures on Axminster households, and members acknowledgement that a great deal of expenditure (from reserves) had been undertaken in this financial year, the following proposals were made and voted upon.

**That this Council does not seek to amortise any existing expenditure within new borrowing even if the projects involved are still ongoing. Proposed by Chair, seconded by KB. Resolved unanimously.**

**That this committee recommend to the FULL Council that an expenditure budget of £449,300 be approved for the FY23-24 with a commensurate precept demand of £291,236.72 \* being submitted to EDDC (the "billing authority") for the same period; the differential being provided by alternative sources of income and expenditure reductions wherever possible. If any deficit were to arise "in-year", this should be met from existing financial non-earmarked reserves. Proposed by Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.**

The final approval of the budget and precept MUST be taken by FULL Council and, therefore, RFO: Please add to January FULL Council agenda for members review and decision.

*\* This equates to a 10% increase in local precept compared with FY22-23 and equates to £9.34 pa. additional (Band D)*

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f) To note the re-appointment of PKF Littlejohn LLP as the External Auditor to this local authority for the period 2022-23 to 2026-27.

Noted.

**SF22/096R** To consider any matters considered as urgent by presiding Chair for discussion/notation only:

None raised by Chair.

## **SF 22/097R**

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. SL 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.**

## **SF 22/098R (IC)**

**To consider matters pertaining to Axminster Guildhall building works; to receive report from Town Clerk on quotes received for works (and preparatory measures) in light of recent surveys undertaken on the building relating to stage lighting, electrical safety and structural integrity.**

*This matter is deemed confidential as it both pertains to financial information considered commercially sensitive.*

Clerk outlined current status of project and expenditure incurred to date. JW suggested that a meeting between the GMC trustees and the FULL Council should be convened to discuss the future governance relationship between the two parties to consider the future operation and financial viability of the venue. Agreed.

Clerk: please liaise with the Chair of GMC and arrange accordingly.

## **SF22/099R (IC)**

**To consider matters pertaining to the “crawl-space” / “roof-void” area above the main hall which is currently inaccessible following the works referred to in SF22/98R (IC); to consider proposals for alternate access from balcony level and to consider budget allocation necessary/appropriate to allow these works to proceed (part of C works programme considered URGENT).**

*This matter is deemed confidential as it pertains to financial information considered commercially sensitive.*

Chair proposed that this issue be deferred until after the meeting above (SF22/087R) had been held. Agreed. No further action at this time.

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## SF22/0100R (IC)

To consider proposals pertaining to Guildhall Dressing Rooms and Jubilee Room and to consider budget allocation necessary/appropriate to allow these works to proceed (part of C works programme considered necessary on safety/amenity grounds).

*This matter is deemed confidential as it pertains to financial information considered commercially sensitive.*

Chair proposed that this issue be deferred until after the meeting above (SF22/087R) had been held. Agreed. No further action at this time.

## SF22/101R (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to Council's Internal Audit services; to consider quotations received from three audit providers as sought by RFO following recent resolution to change internal auditor in accordance with Good Practice guidelines for Auditing and Accountability.

*This matter is deemed confidential as it pertains to financial information considered commercially sensitive.*

It was proposed by JW, seconded by AS, that provider "S" be afforded the contract for the provision of internal audit services for FY2022-23 at the rate quoted. Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please note and liaise with that service provider accordingly. Please notify the other parties that they were unsuccessful.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 9.55pm.

Signed ..... Date.....

Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy & Finance Committee.

**MINUTES APPROVED 27/02/2023; Part ONE Minutes (redacted)**

Held in person on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023. Meeting started at 7.00p.m.