

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

Approved MINUTES on 13th February 2023; Part ONE version (Redacted).

Held in person on Monday 16th January 2023 at 7.00 p.m.

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

(Meeting was deemed quorate).

Also; Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (TC).

Cllr. Sarah Jackson (SJ) (EDDC).

Two members of the public.

Francesca Evans (Nub News) - Press

Chair highlighted the building fire precautions and alerted those present to the fire exits.

Public Forum session.

Representations to Council from parishioners regarding two matters;

- i) EV chargers in Axminster (*TC and SJ provided updates*)
- ii) Road surface deterioration / roadworks / flooding & drainage

As these matters were related to the County Council's duties and obligations, the Chair suggested that a formal letter be written to Cllr. Hall (as County Councillor for Axminster) inviting him to attend the next FULL Council meeting in February under her signature.

Agreed.

Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.15pm

FC22/223

To note members of committee present:

Attendance at meeting shown above.

Continued overleaf.

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FC22/224

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

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

Cllr. Mynard. Absence noted and reason and apology approved (health matters).

Acceptance of reasons for absence proposed by Chair, seconded by JW.

Resolved unanimously.

FC22/225

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

Cllr. Lippett. Noted.

Apologies also received from District (and County) Councillor, Ian Hall and EDDC Cllr.

Andrew Moulding. Noted.

FC22/226

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 declared by members present.

FC22/227

i) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Ordinary meeting of the FULL Council held on 12th December 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:

Clerk updated members as to the forthcoming local elections in May 2023 and provided a timetable for the key dates and times involved. Noted. Chair asked all members to let the Clerk know if they intended to re-stand as a Town Councillor simply so the Clerk could ensure that nomination packs were made available and any advice needed freely given in a timely manner.

Continued overleaf.

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FC22/228

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

- a) Operations Committee meeting held 15th November 2022.
- b) Strategy & Finance Committee meeting held 9th January 2023.

Minutes of both meetings reviewed and noted by members.

FC22/229

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.*

Recommendations from the Operations Committee meeting held on 15/11/2022 were proposed for adoption by JW. Seconded by AS. Resolved.

Recommendations from the Strategy & Finance Committee meeting held on 09/01/2023 were proposed for adoption by JW. Seconded by AS. Resolved.

FC22/230

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. Items already scheduled for Part Two consideration (FC22/240 (IC) to FC22/242 (IC) incl. below, were noted but the Chair proposed that agenda item FC22/240 (IC) be brought back into Part One business so that the public present could hear the debate. Noted and agreed.

Continued overleaf.

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FC22/231

To consider Council's financial matters:

a) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve payments for December 2022 (£45076.12) Financial reports had been circulated to members before meeting and published online.

Chair proposed payment of accounts due for December 2022. Seconded by JW.

Resolved unanimously.

b) To receive, and note, Responsible Financial Officer's Report and financial pack for December 2022. **Noted.**

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

None raised.

d) To consider any matters pertaining to the Town Council's ongoing Risk Management Assessments.

RFO confirmed that assessment of Council's risks was being compiled presently and would be presented to S&F Committee as soon as completed. **Noted.**

e) To consider a grant application from East Devon Citizens Advice Bureau for £2422.20 Members considered the benefit of the charity's operations to the residents of Axminster.

Full award of the sum requested was proposed by the Chair. Seconded by EP. Resolved unanimously. RFO: Please note and action payment accordingly (prior to the end of the financial year on 31/03/2023) and notify applicant.

f) To consider recommendations from the Strategy & Finance Committee as to the 2023-24 Financial Year Budget Preparation and Precept Calculation process; Full Council to resolve budget and precept figures for this period, prior to submission to EDDC.

There was a lengthy debate amongst members on the impact of an increase in local council tax precept on Axminster households whilst the town was struggling with the ongoing "cost of living crisis". RFO updated members as to the options available to them.

It was subsequently proposed by the Chair, seconded by JW, that the Town Council's expenditure budget for FY23-24 be set at £449,300 with a commensurate precept demand being submitted to EDDC (the billing authority) for £291236.72 which represented a flat 10% increase in precept for a Band D household. Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please liaise with the Chair to prepare a budget / precept statement for publication on the Town Council's website, social media channels and within the newsletter content.

Please submit the Precept demand as above to EDDC by the prescribed deadline.

Continued overleaf.

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FC22/232

To consider planning matters:

a) To consider any planning applications awaiting consideration (and decision)

Hyperlinks to EDDC website can be found using the blue highlighted applications references.

i) [22/2698/FUL](#) – Woodbury Cottage, Woodbury Lane, Axminster, EX13 5TL
Proposed double garage with storage above.

SL proposed support. Seconded by BS. Resolved unanimously.

ii) [22/2745/FUL](#) – Moorland Ridge, Trinity Hill Road, Axminster. EX13 5SS
18 no. solar panels on 3 ground-mounted arrays of 6 panels each.

SL proposed support as application was in line with Council's adopted climate action objectives. Seconded by KB. Resolved unanimously.

iii) [22/2793/TCA](#) – Nelson House, Coombe Lane, Axminster. EX13 5AX

T1 Monterey Cypress. Reduce crown height by 2m approx. plus removal of further stems and a crown lift on western side of tree.

Taking on board advice from the Council's Honorary Tree Warden and noting public objections received, SL proposed that the Council object to these proposals. Seconded by SBi. Resolved unanimously.

iv) [22/2714/FUL](#) – Cuts and Co, Boxfield Road, Axminster, EX13 5LB

Change of use from Hair & Beauty Salon (Class E) to dwellinghouse (Class C3)

Whilst regretting the loss of a small business from the town, SL proposed support. Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

b) To ratify planning decisions made by way of delegated authority afforded to Chair of Planning Committee, Cllr. Leat, and the Council's Proper Officer.

None to be ratified.

Continued overleaf.

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FC22/232

To consider planning matters (continued):

c) To consider any planning applications received after the agenda publication and currently awaiting consideration (and decision) – published on a supplementary agenda: *Hyperlinks to EDDC website can be found using the blue highlighted applications references.*

None received for consideration.

d) To note planning correspondence received:

To note Planning Appeal Dismissal for Stanzita, King Edward Road, Axminster, EX13 5PP (EDDC Planning Application 22/0262/FUL) on the grounds of unacceptable harm to the local highway network.

Council Business to be considered:

FC22/233

To receive an update report from the Axminster Neighbourhood Plan (ANP) Steering Group, presented by Cllr. Andrea Sedgewick.

AS presented her report. Points of note:

Last three months had seen a great deal of activity and consultations.

AS thanked members of Council and the public members of the Steering group for their time and energy.

AS thanked all those members of the public (and other interested parties) who had attended both the EDDC Local Plan event and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group consultation event and had responded to the ANP consultation (48 responses).

SH had circulated the draft of a Steering Group (composite) response to the EDDC Local Plan Consultation which was due for submission by 15/01/2023. Key points to note from this response was a broad level of support for the ANP and multiple objections to proposed development sites across the town. It was agreed that the Steering Group has succinctly captured the consensus views of those participating and that this response should be ratified by the Town Council as according with their collective view (as the parent organisation of the Steering group).

The Chair proposed that this Town Council therefore adopt and ratify the feedback response as circulated as the Town Council's formal response to the EDDC LP consultation exercise. Seconded by KB. Resolved unanimously.

Continued overleaf.

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FC22/233

To receive an update report from the Axminster Neighbourhood Plan (ANP) Steering Group, presented by Cllr. Andrea Sedgewick (continued):

Delegated authority was afforded to the Clerk (in conjunction with SH and the Chair of Council) to submit and liaise with EDDC LP officers moving forward.

AS reported that the next draft of the ANP would be available in approximately 6 to 8 weeks and copies would be circulated to members at that time. This would then be submitted to EDDC for their review and comment. AS reminded members that some pressing matters in the town, such as potholes, drainage, sewerage, highway infrastructure, traffic management, could not be dealt with by the Town Councils (as we neither had the expertise, resource or legal powers to act in those areas) and that the Town Council should maintain pressure on the higher authorities to deliver improvements to the town before additional development was permitted.

Chair thanked AS and the steering group for their continued efforts in this regard. Noted.

FC22/234

To consider correspondence received from Splicetek regarding proposed future telecommunications works in Sector Lane / Stammer Hill (April 2023) and to consider whether Council wishes to make any formal comments or objections to the proposals.

Noted. No further action proposed other than to monitor progress and deal with any traffic congestion or issues that arise at that time.

FC22/235

To consider recommendations from Strategy & Finance Committee relating to the adoption of revised Standing Orders for this Council and, if thought appropriate, to resolve to adopt the revised version as Council Policy.

Proposed by the Chair. Seconded by SL. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please publish on website and annotate draft copy for archive as adopted.

Chair noted that the Council's Financial regulations were still being reviewed at Strategy & Finance Committee and these would be brought back to the Council at the earliest opportunity.

Continued overleaf.

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FC22/236

To receive a presentation from Cllr. Steadman on the inaugural meeting of the Climate Action Group (CAG) and to consider next steps and funding proposals/requirements.

Cllr. Steadman presented on the Climate Action Group's (CAG) recent activity since inception. They had met as a organisation and encouraged interested parties to participate. Mindful of their limited resource and legal powers, they had nevertheless compiled a list of activities and actions that they would like to take forward with the Council's support (financial and administrative) as they believed these mirrored the Town Council's own objectives and aims. **At this point of the meeting, the Chair proposed that Standing Orders be suspended to allow Cllr. Jackson to participate in the discussion. Seconded by JW. Resolved.**

Cllr. Jackson provided an insight as to what EDDC were doing themselves in this area. **JW proposed that the Town Council endorse the aims & aspirations of the CAG and provide financial support (where appropriate & within the budgetary constraints already resolved upon) to encourage the group to continue its activities for the betterment and wellbeing of the town and its citizens and to assist the Council in achieving its own sustainability objectives. Seconded by KB. Resolved unanimously.**

Clerk/RFO: Please liaise with the CAG executive group to offer support when and where sought.

FC22/237

To confirm the date of the next scheduled FULL meeting of the Town Council - 13th February 2023

Noted.

FC22/238

To consider any matters considered as urgent by the presiding Chair and to receive any announcements from the Chair of the Council.

Having brought forward agenda item FC22/240 from Part Two earlier, the Chair noted the report from the DCC Urban Renewal Project and thanked all parties for their involvement. This is now a publicly accessible document and Council welcomed comment from the public as to the works ongoing between the three authorities (ATC, EDDC & DCC) to maximise the town's potential, unlock funding from wherever available and to take forward the Axminster Town Regeneration project. Part Two element of **FC22/240 (IC)** is dealt with below.

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FC22/239

Vice-Chair 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 the Chair.. Resolved unanimously.

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.

FC22/240 (IC)

To receive an updated report from Clerk/RFO on the ongoing Axminster Urban Renewal “Quick Wins” Project in conjunction with EDDC and DCC Economy Teams and to note actions proposed and agree forward progress;

This matter is deemed confidential due to the commercial sensitivity of the subject to be discussed and the nature of the information to be considered by members.

After receiving report from Clerk, *it was proposed that this Council accept the offer of £5000 from DCC towards administrative costs of preparing for the Green Wedge E-Bikes project (in conjunction with GWR) and delegate authority to the Clerk to draw down these funds and expend accordingly, ensuring that full reimbursement be obtained thus leaving the Council in a cost-neutral position). Proposed by the Chair, seconded by EP.*

Clerk/RFO: Please note and action accordingly.

FC22/241 (IC)

To consider employment matters deemed confidential.

This matter is deemed confidential due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed (Employee matters).

Clerk provided an update (noting that Employment Committee were due to meet on 23/01/2023). Noted.

Clerk: please continue to keep members abreast of developments in this regard.

Continued overleaf.

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FC22/242 (IC)

To consider a request regarding additional tenancy proposal for the Old Courthouse complex that requires Councillors decision on terms, duration and usage.

This matter is deemed confidential due to the commercial sensitivity of the subject to be discussed.

Members received a report from the Clerk. It was proposed by AS, seconded by BS, that the Town Council offer this space to the Totally Locally Banners Group on a rolling-tenancy basis (supported by a Licence agreement) as a "Grant of Benefit" to support this local community project, and also provide a nominal sum for the provision of lighting and incidental electrical usage as an additional contribution. Usage of utilities for heating etc would however be chargeable (these arrangements to be delegated to the RFO to administer and charge for). Resolved unanimously.

With no further business to deal with, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.45pm.

Signed Date: 13th February 2023

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