

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 Annual Meeting of the FULL Council

MINUTES APPROVED at FULL Council 19th June 2023

Held in person on Monday 15th May 2023 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Farrow (JF) (Presiding Chair), Bourne (ABo.), Burrough (KB), Leat (SL), Lippett (RL), Paice (EP), Steadman (BS), Walden (JW) and Willey (DW).
(*Meeting was quorate*).

Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (TC)
EDDC Councillors Sarah Jackson & Simon Smith
14 members of the public.
1 member of the press.

Presiding Chair highlighted the building fire precautions, alerted those present to the fire exits and outlined the meeting procedure, protocol and member's declarations and interests.

Public Forum session.

6 members of the public spoke, all in opposition to the proposed development at the Land West of A358 / Chard Road (Weycroft) – see agenda item FC23/082AM.

Presiding Chair thanked all speakers for their contributions and with no other speakers then closed the Public Forum at 7.25pm.

Cllr. Farrow surrendered the Chair at this point of the meeting and, in the absence of a Vice-Chair, Cllr. Walden (JW) assumed the role of Acting-Chair by virtue of his position as "Father of the Council".

FC 23/071AM

To elect the Chair (Mayor) of the Town Council

JW took the Chair to bring this agenda item for consideration.

JW spoke to thank Cllr. Farrow for her work in the role for the last 12 months over a period of upheaval, change and a great many challenges. JW proposed that JF be re-elected as Chair (Mayor) for the forthcoming Council year (until May 2024). Seconded by ABo.

JF accepted the nomination. No other nominations for the position of Chair of the Council were received. Resolved 8 votes for, none against, 1 abstention (JF).

Continued overleaf.

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FC 23/072AM

Signing of the Declaration of Acceptance of Office by the Chair (Mayor).

JF signed the declaration, duly witnessed by the Proper Officer.

FC 23/073AM

Opening remarks to the Annual Meeting from the Chair (Mayor).

The Chair thanked members present (and the public) for their support and stressed that it was an honour to serve the Council and the wider community for a further 12 months and that she would do so to the best of her ability. The Chair thanked all members for their hard work and enthusiasm, the Council's officers for their diligence and professionalism and the countless volunteers throughout the town who give up their time and energy willingly to make Axminster a better, happier and more vibrant place to live and work.

FC 23/074AM

To elect the Vice-Chair (Deputy Mayor) of the Town Council

BS proposed that SB be elected as Vice-Chair (Deputy Mayor) for the forthcoming Council year (until May 2024). Seconded by JW. In Cllr. Birnie's absence, the Clerk confirmed that SB had previously indicated that she was willing to accept the nomination.

No other nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Council were received.

Resolved unanimously.

FC 23/075i)AM

To note members of the Town Council recently elected (unopposed):

Clerk highlighted the names of those Councillors recently re-elected after the local elections on May 4th 2023 and confirmed that three Casual Vacancies currently existed (one each for the Town Ward, Weycroft Ward and Raymonds Hill Ward). The Chair welcomed the two newest members, David Willey and Terence Langdon, to the Town Council and noted with sadness the departure of those members who had decided not to seek re-election.

FC 23/075ii)AM

To seek agreement from all members that they consent to the delivery of agenda summons and associated documents from the Clerk via email:

Unanimous agreement. No objections or abstentions. Noted.

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FC 23/076AM

To note members of committee present:

Those in attendance at this meeting are shown above.

FC 23/077AM

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

Cllr. Birnie (SB). Absence noted and reason and apology approved (on leave).

Cllr. Brooker (ABr). Absence noted and reason and apology approved (on leave).

Cllr. Langdon (TL). Absence noted and reason and apology approved (on leave).

Proposed by Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

FC 23/078AM

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

Cllr. Ian Hall (DCC/EDDC) and Hon. Footpath Warden, John Vanderwolfe had sent their apologies. Noted.

FC 23/079AM

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.

None declared.

FC 23/080i)AM

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the FULL Council held on Monday 17th April 2023 as previously circulated to members and published online:

Approval and adoption of minutes proposed by The Chair. Seconded by BS.

Resolved unanimously.

FC 23/080ii)AM

To consider any matters arising from minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the FULL Council held on Monday 17th April :

Chair wished to record Council's thanks to Cllr. Ian Hall for the recent repair works to the pedestrian crossing outside of the Post Office on West Street. Noted.

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FC 23/081AM

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.

FC 23/082AM

To consider planning matters:

a) To consider any planning applications received prior to the agenda publication and currently awaiting consideration (and decision):

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

1) [23/0685/MOUT](#) – Land adjacent to Cloakham Lawns / West of Chard Road, Axminster. Hybrid outline application for up to 140 dwellings, employment land, open space including drainage, and ancillary works.

Consideration of this item was introduced by Chair of the Planning Committee, SL.

Summary of objections from members:

Flooding concerns, both on site and elsewhere downhill.

Environmental concerns regarding phosphate/nitrate pollution of the River Axe.

Pressure on current infrastructure in town as a result of new occupations.

Traffic concerns on A358 and within development complex itself.

Impact on protected animal species in area.

Drainage and water issues on the site and elsewhere in town.

Wider environmental impact to countryside and eco-habitats.

Chair proposed suspension of Council's Standing Orders to allow further public representations/contributions to the debate. Resolved.

Two additional public representations received by members.

Chair proposed resumption of Council's Standing Orders. Resolved.

It was subsequently proposed by SL, seconded by JW, that the Town Council opposes this application for the reasons stated above. Resolved unanimously.

2) [21/3025/MFUL](#) – Land West of Prestaller Farm, Beavor Lane, Axminster.

Erection of 29 dwellings (amended plans relating to drainage).

After a review of the additional planning information provided by the applicant/agent, it was subsequently proposed by SL, seconded by The Chair, that the Town Council maintains its opposition to this application for the reasons previously given. No change in Council's position with regards to this application. Resolved unanimously.

SL thanked the applicant for providing the additional information as requested previously.

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FC 23/082AM

To consider planning matters (continued):

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.

Ratification of all 9 (nine) applications listed on the meeting agenda which had been previously supported by virtue of a delegated decision of the Planning Committee was approved, after proposal from SL (Chair of Planning Committee). Resolved.

c) To consider any planning applications received after the agenda publication and currently awaiting consideration (and decision) – *None received for consideration.*

d) To note planning correspondence received (if any). *None received as at time of agenda publication.*

e) To note any matters relating to planning that have arisen as a result of EDDC Planning Committee or Strategic Planning Committee meetings since the last FULL meeting of Council. *None received as at time of agenda publication.*

f) To consider any other planning matters not already included above, including representations from members on such matters (e.g. Planning, enforcement, planning legislation, TPO's etc):

Members of the public had raised the issue of the temporary structure on the land adjacent to the West Street car park which is purportedly being used for residential accommodation. The site itself is in a derelict condition with no signs of development progression and members felt that this was a matter best dealt with by EDDC using their Section 215 (Town and County Planning Act) powers. Clerk was asked to prepare a letter to EDDC expressing Council/public concerns over residential occupation, sewage, waste collections, site condition and general nuisance concerns to neighbouring properties.

This course of action was proposed by JW, seconded by BS. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please action accordingly.

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FC 23/083AM

To consider financial matters:

a) To note the Council's Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) for 2023-24 (employed role). RFO explained that the appointment was not necessary as Mr. Hayward was employed (by virtue of a contract of employment) as both Clerk and RFO to the Council. Noted.

b) To consider payment of Chair's (Mayor's) Allowance for 2023-24 in the context of previous budgetary decisions of this Council.

It was proposed by The Chair, seconded by JW, that no allowance be used/expended in this financial year (FY23-24) in light of the budgetary constraints facing the Council.

Resolved unanimously.

c) To consider payment of Councillor Allowances for FY 2023-24; RFO to outline legislation. Members noted the report from the RFO. Any members wishing to claim their allowance should contact the RFO to discuss the relevant arrangements.

d) To consider Council's Insurance matters for the forthcoming year; RFO to speak on this issue.

RFO confirmed that the Council had previously entered into a 5-year FTA (fixed term agreement) to ensure consistency and control of insurance expenditure. No further action necessary as renewal was approved under a previous resolution for that 5-year period and budgeted for within Council's annual cost forecast. Noted.

e) To confirm Council's bank signatories and to revise/amend as deemed necessary and/or appropriate; RFO to seek confirmation from members willing to act in this capacity.

Current bank signatories confirmed as:

JF/SL/JW

Chair proposed that BS/KB/DW and ABo. be added to the bank signatory mandate group with immediate effect. Resolved unanimously. Clerk: Please note and arrange for both primary bank accounts, Lloyds and Unity Trust Bank.

f) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the Council's membership of NALC/DALC for 2024

Proposed by Chair, seconded by ABo. Resolved unanimously.

g) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve and ratify payments for April 2023.

Proposed by Chair, seconded by SL. Resolved unanimously.

Continued overleaf.

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FC 23/083AM

To consider financial matters (continued):

h) To receive, and note, Responsible Financial Officer's report and financial pack for April 2023 in the approved format (also published online) including Q1 Budget Monitor report. *Received and noted.*

i) Questions to the RFO on these accounts / financial reports from members. *None raised.*

j) To receive report from RFO on progress with completion and submission of the Town Council's Annual Return (AGAR3) and the Internal Audit cycle/governance.

RFO reported that the conclusion of the AGAR process was scheduled for end of June 2023. Noted with thanks.

k) To note the provisional dates for the publication of the Notice Period for the Exercise of Public Rights for the previous financial period FY22-23:

Dates proposed: Monday 3rd July 2023 to Friday 11th August 2023 inclusive.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by JW, that these dates be approved for the relevant Notice Period. Resolved unanimously.

l) To review schedule of Council's automated payments (standing orders and direct debits) and to approve their continued use and mandate authority.

Schedule was proposed for approval by Chair, seconded by EP. Resolved unanimously.

m) To review and, if thought fit, to approve the re-adoption of the Town Council's Strategic Policy for Investments and Borrowings (last adopted March 2022).

Re-adoption of the Policy was proposed by Chair, seconded by BS. Resolved unanimously.

n) To consider Town Council's Grant Award budget allocation for FY23-24 and to agree any provisional methodology for the assessment or promotion of grant award applications.

Councillors noted the reduction of the grant award budget for FY23-24 to £10,000 (from £25,000 in FY22-23) and confirmed that grant applications would be assessed on a "first come-first served" basis rather than allocating a specific sum each month.

It was subsequently proposed by KB, seconded by the Chair, that the unallocated grant budget from FY22-23 (£930) should be rolled over to this financial year, rather than being returned to general reserves. Resolved 8 votes for, with 1 abstention. RFO: Please note.

o) To consider virements between previously allocated reserve funds.

KB proposed that £8000 Election Costs reserve be annulled and those ring-fenced funds be allocated back to General Reserves (based on the recent uncontested elections and imminent co-options to fill the casual vacancies). Seconded by Chair. Resolved unanimously.

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FC23/084 AM

To consider membership of Council committees, working parties and partner organisations:

a) Strategy & Finance Committee

Proposal from Chair that DW join the committee. Approved.

b) Operations Committee

Proposal from Chair that DW join the committee. Approved.

c) Planning Committee

No change. Chair reminded all members that they are free to join at any time if they so wish.

d) Employment Committee

Proposal from Chair that SL join the committee. Approved.

e) Axminster Renewal Forum (ARF)

Proposal from Chair that BS and DW join the ARF panel. Approved.

f) Axminster Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group (ANPSG)

Proposal from Chair that ABo. join the ANPSG panel as a Councillor representative.

Approved. It was noted that there are three EDDC ward members who will wish to attend the meetings in that capacity. Former Cllr. Andrea Sedgewick will be stepping down in Sept. '23 but that former councillor Steve Holt may wish to continue. Noted.

g) Axminster Climate Action Group

No change. Chair reminded all members that they are free to join at any time if they so wish.

h) Town Council representative to Chamber of Commerce

Proposal from Chair that RL be formally appointed as the Town Council's representative to the Chamber of Commerce. Approved.

Chair also wished to confirm that Cllrs. Bourne and Paice had volunteered to represent the Town Council on the trustee board of the Guildhall Management Committee, and that Cllr. Bourne also wished to be the Town Council's representative to the Axminster Twinning Association. Clerk advised that these appointments were not tabled on the agenda and so would have to be considered at the FULL Council meet in June. Noted.

FC23/085 AM

To consider nominations for Axminster Town Council's Hon. Footpath (P3) warden.

Clerk confirmed that incumbent HFW, John Vanderwolfe (JV), had kindly agreed to continue in the role for another year. JW proposed that JV be appointed for a further 12 months.

Seconded by BS. Resolved unanimously.

Chair asked Clerk to convey Council's thanks to JV for his time and energy in this role. Noted.

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FC23/086 AM

To consider nominations for Axminster Town Council's Hon. Tree Warden (HTW).

Clerk confirmed that incumbent HTW, Michael Davis (MD) had kindly agreed to continue in the role for another year. Chair proposed that MD be appointed for a further 12 months.

Seconded by SL. Resolved unanimously.

Chair asked Clerk to convey Council's thanks to MD for his time and energy in this role. Noted.

KB left the meeting at this point as she had a conflicting engagement to attend to.

FC23/087 AM

To consider the review and, if thought fit, the re-adoption of the Town Council's Code of (Member) Conduct policy which accords with the adopted EDDC Code of Conduct Policy.

Chair proposed that the EDDC-model Code of Member Conduct Policy be re-adopted for a further 12 months. Seconded by DW. Resolved unanimously.

New Council Business to be considered:

FC23/088i) AM

To note the election of three EDDC ward members for Axminster.

Noted. The Chair offered her congratulations to all three EDDC ward members and looked forward to working with them all for the greater benefit of the town of Axminster.

FC23/088ii) AM

To consider how the Town Council wishes to liaise, and communicate, with the District Council (and Councillors) and the County Council (and Councillor).

The Chair noted the somewhat unique circumstances whereby two of the ward members worked for the Town Council and noted that this effectively meant that there would usually be a ward member present whenever the Council met, but the Chair hoped that all 3 would attend as a matter of course as the 2-way dialogue was critically important for both Councils.

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FC23/089 AM

To note the date of the Axminster Big Dinner event – Friday June 30th 2023 – 4pm until 9pm

The Town Council will be hosting an “engagement” stand on the night.

Noted. Clerk was asked to liaise with members to ensure that our community table was manned throughout the evening by way of a rota-system.

FC23/090 AM

To consider and, if thought fit, to resolve that Axminster Town Council will abide by the requirements of the Transparency Code Regulations 2015 and will publish all relevant information at the financial year end in accordance with the requirements of that legislation.

The resolution was proposed by the Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk was asked to create a stand-alone webpage within the existing Town Council website to publicise the Council’s compliance and to publish all the relevant and statutory information in this regard. Noted.

FC23/091 AM

To receive report from Clerk on the statutory and legislative protocol for the co-option of Councillors to fill the three vacant seats (one each for Town, Weycroft and Raymonds Hill wards). *The current vacancies are not subject to the usual rules for co-option as a result of the recent uncontested election in the town; Clerk will outline the NALC/DALC advice and the resultant timetables for co-option of new members.*

Report received and noted. Clerk was asked to prepare a suitable advertisement seeking nominations for co-option to the Town Council in June 2023 and publish this on noticeboards, social media, website etc. Please add an agenda item for Co-Options onto June FULL Council agenda.

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FC23/092 AM

To consider request from parishioner for enhanced AED (Defib) location publicity in conjunction with town traders / retail establishments and to also consider additional training/awareness events to promote and encourage/promote AED use and to raise user confidence.

After discussion, it was proposed that the Council should advertise the opportunity for defibrillator awareness courses locally (paid for and hosted by the TC) and – having gauged interest – make arrangements accordingly. Furthermore, it was agreed that the office/admin. team will create a small quantity of laminated cards (as a trial) that can be used as an aide-memoire for residents and retailers alike to help them identify their nearest public defibrillator in the town area. Noted. Clerk: Please action.

FC23/093 AM

To consider the terms of the CCIF funding agreement with South Western Railways (in conjunction with the Department of Transport) and Co-Bikes Limited to allow the Green Wedge E-Bikes project to progress and, if thought fit, to approve and authorise signing.

Proposed by Chair, seconded by JW, that the Funding Agreement be signed to enable the release of the SWR grant funding and the subsequent progression of the project. Resolved unanimously. Clerk: please note and return to SWR for processing asap.

FC23/094 AM

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

None raised by the presiding Chair.

FC23/095 AM

To confirm the date of the next scheduled FULL meeting of the Town Council - 12th June 2023.

Noted.

FC23/096 AM

To confirm the date of the next scheduled ANNUAL meeting of the Town Council - 13th May 2024.

Noted.

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FC23/097 AM

It is 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.

Other Council Business to be considered (Part TWO – Confidential)

FC23/098(IC) AM

To consider proposals and costings for upgrade and improvement to existing CCTV system (internal and external) at The Guildhall, West Street, Axminster to ensure that the building meets with all licencing requirements for public use.

This business is being conducted in Part Two (closed session) due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed.

After receipt of a report from the Clerk, and after further discussion, it was proposed by ABo., seconded by JW, that delegated authority to spend up to £4,000 was afforded to the Clerk (this being considered a more cost-effective option for enhancing the CCTV coverage at the Guildhall for safety and security reasons). Resolved 7 votes for, 1 abstention (DW, by virtue of his self-employed status in this field).

Clerk: please note and arrange for the installation to proceed. Cllr. Willey kindly volunteered to meet with the Clerk and Administrator to walk around the site and offer suggestions for optimal siting points for cameras etc. Offer was welcomed with gratitude.

With no further business to deal with, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.50pm.

Signed Date; 19th June 2023

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15th May 2023**

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