

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 on 11.9.2023; Part ONE version (Redacted)

Held in person on Monday 10th July 2023 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Birnie (SB) (Acting-Chair), Bridge (PB), Bruce (DB), Brooker (ABr.), Langdon (TL), Dowdeswell (MD), Leat (SL), Lippett (RL), Steadman (BS), Walden (JW) and Willey (DW).

(Meeting was deemed quorate).

Also; Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (TC).

One member of the public was in attendance.

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

Public Forum session.

Open Public Forum session (limited to 15 minutes or as otherwise agreed by Chair presiding).

There were no representations to Council from members of the public.

Acting-Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.05pm

FC23/129

To note members of committee present:

Councillors in attendance at meeting are shown above.

FC23/130

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

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

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

Cllr. Farrow (JF). Absence noted and reason and apology approved (poor health).

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

Acceptance of reason for absence proposed by Chair, seconded by BS.

Resolved unanimously.

Continued overleaf.

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FC23/131

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

Cllr. Ian Hall (DCC). Noted.

Cllr. Sarah Jackson (EDDC). Noted.

Cllr. Simon Smith (EDDC). Noted.

FC23/132

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.

SB declared an Affects NRI in respect of the agenda item FC23/141D (Grant application from Trident Swim Club). Noted.

No other declarations made by members.

FC23/133i)

i) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Annual meeting of the FULL Council held on 19th June 2023 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes:

Approval of the minutes proposed by JW, seconded by SL. Resolved nem con.

Minutes will be signed by the Acting-Chair as a true and faithful record of the business of that meeting.

FC23/133ii)

ii) Matters arising from those minutes:

No matters arising raised by members or Clerk.

FC23/134

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

a) Employment Committee meeting held 26th June 2023.

Meeting minutes noted by members. No matters arising raised by members.

Continued overleaf.

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FC23/135

To consider the recommendations from that committee (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.*

None requiring consideration. Noted.

FC23/136

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.

FC23/137

To consider matters pertaining to the ongoing development of the Axminster Neighbourhood Plan.

To receive an update report from members of the ANPSG.

Update report received from Chair of the Steering Group, Cllr. Bernie Steadman.

A meeting of the SG had been held to agree upon the consultation questions.

It had been proposed to proceed with the purchase of a "Survey Monkey" package to enable the hosting and compilation of survey responses from local residents and that the SG would welcome the Council's provision of staffing resource to assist in the creation of the NHP survey/consultation template and the circulation of the survey in the community when format and questions agreed upon.

More public "drop-in" sessions were planned for later in the year, both at the Guildhall and at other event spaces around the town to encourage a wider participation. There had been 300+ responses to the last consultation and it was widely hoped that the next survey response would surpass that. It was acknowledged that the language used in the policy wording was necessarily technical but it was hoped that the supplementary documents provided would help respondents understand and contribute fully.

The SG will meet next in September. The survey responses would take approx. one month to compile with assessment being undertaken throughout October to December, with an anticipated publication of the results early in the New Year.

BS noted the recent DLUHC delays to the anticipated NPPF launch and also that EDDC were holding back until further guidance and clarification from central government planning ministers was received so as to prevent any unnecessary work being undertaken that might ultimately end up being worthless or incorrect in its direction and objectives.

BS urged all members to participate in the survey when launched and encourage all their friends, family and acquaintances to do the same.

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FC23/138

To receive an update on the work of the Axminster Climate Action group.

Presentation from BS on recent ACAG activity. Noted.

Acting-Chair thanked the group for their work across the town and looked forward to seeing the fruits of their labours in the months and years to come.

FC23/139

To receive a progress report/update on the work of the Axminster Regeneration Forum (ARF) in conjunction with the EDDC/DCC Urban Renewal project.

Presentation from Clerk on progress with regards to the ARF. Noted.

FC23/140

To receive an update from the Town Council's representative to the Axminster Chamber of Commerce.

Presentation from RL. Noted.

MD offered to support the Council and Chamber as the future representative.

Noted with thanks.

FC23/141

To consider Council's financial matters:

a) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve payments for June 2023 (£29654.42)
Financial reports had been circulated to members before meeting and published online.

**Acting-Chair proposed payment of accounts due for June 2023. Seconded by BS.
Resolved unanimously.**

b) To receive, and note, Responsible Financial Officer's Report and financial pack for June 2023 (Q1). **Noted.**

c) Questions to the RFO on these accounts/financial reports.
None raised.

Continued overleaf.

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FC23/141

To consider Council's financial matters (continued):

d) To consider applications for grant assistance from the following bodies/organisations:

i) Trident Swim Club – seeking £1000 towards specialist training/teaching apparatus.

Acting-Chair had declared an "Affects NRI" in respect of this application.

After a significant debate on the merits, community benefit and possible outcomes of the grant funding application, **RL proposed that Trident Swim Club be awarded the full grant sum of £1000 as requested, seconded by JW, with the conditionality that the spend on the equipment be provided by the recipient and that feedback be provided to Council on the benefits provided by the grant award and the equipment purchased. Noted.**

Subsequently resolved 6 votes for / 3 against / 2 abstentions.

Clerk: Please convey this decision to the applicant and outline the conditions imposed in relation to the grant award. Diarise to follow up on this later in the year.

e) To receive RFO update on the FY22-23 Annual Return (AGAR3) submission and to note the commencement of the Period for the Exercise of Public Rights.

Noted.

f) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the Board Resolution required by Lloyds bank to allow the Council to make changes to its banking mandate with that financial institution.

Acting-Chair proposed approval of the required Lloyds Bank Board Resolution. Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please note and submit to Lloyds Bank with associated papers as soon as possible.

g) To consider a proposal to add Cllr. Sara Leat to the bank signatory mandate for Unity Trust Bank.

BS proposed that Cllr. Sara Leat be added as a signatory for Unity Trust Bank. Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please note and submit to Unity Trust Bank with associated papers as soon as possible.

h) To consider a proposal to apply for credit account for a charge card facility with FuelGenie (Card) to enable the purchase of specialist fuel for the Council's plant and grounds equipment.

Acting-Chair proposed that the credit application be approved and the application submitted, all other matters duly delegated to the RFO to arrange. Seconded by DW. Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please note and submit application as resolved as soon as possible.

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FC23/142

To consider planning matters:

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

Applications presented by the Chair of the Planning Committee, SL.

i) 23/1251/FUL – 10 North Street, Axminster. Ex13 5QD

Single Storey rear extension with raised deck, removal of studio and parking area excavations.

SL proposed that Council support the application noting the issues of possible DCC land ownership, parking markings and signage were a matter for DCC to comment upon. Seconded BS.

Resolved 10 votes for, 1 abstention (TL – a close neighbour).

ii) 23/1179/FUL (also 23/1180/LBC) – Archway Bookshop, Church Street, Axminster, EX13 5AQ

Change of use from Class E to residential (C3).

SL proposed that Council support the application noting the regret from members that another retail facility in the high street was being lost. Seconded JW.

Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please submit these comments to EDDC Planning Portal without delay.

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 considered.

c) To consider any planning applications received after the agenda publication and currently awaiting consideration (and decision) – published on a supplementary agenda:
None to be considered.

d) To note planning correspondence received:

1) To note receipt of correspondence relating to an appeal against a decision of EDDC Planning dept. in respect of 22/0261/FUL Heatherdale, Cooks Lane, Axminster, EX13 5SQ. Noted.

SL proposed that the Town Council make no further comments in the appeal process noting the Council's previous opposition to the application. Agreed.

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 to be considered.

f) To ratify the appointment of Cllr. Mark Dowdeswell onto the Axminster Town Council Planning Committee.

Proposed by Acting-Chair. Seconded by SL. Resolved unanimously.

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Council Business to be considered:

FC23/143

To receive update in respect of recent enquiry to community bus companies regarding timetables and de-touring/diversions on Axminster Carnival evening.
Response from the bus operator noted. Members were in agreement to monitor the bus activity on 16/9 (Carnival day) and report back to Council if anything went awry.

FC23/144

i) **To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the appointment to the Town Council of a specialist HR provider (under fixed term contract) at a cost of £1925 per annum.**

Proposed by Acting-Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

ii) **To approve the suspension of Council's Financial Regulations for this service procurement in light of the urgency of the service requirement which has prevented the usual compliance with those financial regulations (ie. RFO to endeavour to obtain three comparable quotes for the service provision).**

Proposed by JW, seconded by BS. Resolved unanimously.

FC23/145

To consider the adoption of the Operations Committee Terms of Reference (as per that Committee's resolved recommendation).

Proposed by JW, seconded by Acting-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

FC23/146

To consider suggestion that the Town Council seek to create (in conjunction with local schools) an Axminster Youth Council.

Clerk was asked to research this subject further and liaise with the local schools and bring a report back to Council as soon as he was able to. Members were broadly in support of the principle of encouraging youth engagement via a Youth Council but wished to understand the wider implications and work-load of such a project. Noted.

FC23/147

To consider the appointment of the Town Council's representative to the EDDC Arts and Culture Forum.

This agenda item had erroneously been carried across from the June meeting and a resolution already approved. No further consideration of the matter was therefore necessary. Acting-Chair moved to the next agenda item.

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FC23/148

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

JW raised the issue of the ongoing Railway Ticket Office consultation exercise.

Members were in agreement that it was appropriate to oppose the plans to close ticket offices on the SWR/GWR rail network but that a Council response was not as effective as individual responses from members, their friends and families and wider circle of associates and acquaintances. The more responses received, the better.

All members were encouraged to submit their own consultation responses by the deadline date.

FC23/149

To confirm the date of the next scheduled FULL meeting of the Town Council -

11th September 2023. Noted that Council did not ordinarily meet in FULL session in August but that an Extraordinary meeting of the Council would be convened on the 24th July 2023 with the scheduled meeting of the Strategy & Finance Committee subsequently deferred until the 31st July.

FC23/150

It was proposed by JW 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 Acting-Chair of the Council, SB.

Resolved unanimously.

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

FC23/151 (IC)

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve any recommendations of the Council's committees that require discussion or consideration in Part Two due to the confidential nature of the business outlined in those recommendations.

None to be considered. Acting-Chair moved to the next item of business.

Continued overleaf.

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FC23/152 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to a proposed tenancy of a Town Council property asset. *This matter is deemed confidential as it relates to the terms of a tenancy agreement between the Town Council and a potential tenant of a Town Council property/building.*

RL declared an Affects NRI declaration as she is a close friend of the prospective tenant. Noted. Clerk outlined the tenancy agreement proposed. Councillors supported the tenancy and welcome the venture to the town.

In recognition of the present condition of the premises, and the offer from the incoming tenant to undertake remedial decoration and improvements works, it was proposed by Acting-Chair, seconded by BS, that a specific rent free period be offered, subject to the payment of a security deposit and signing of a 12month Licence Agreement, with rent set at market value terms with service charges payable towards the shared costs of the complex. Clerk to arrange electrical & lighting upgrades as soon as possible and replacement of the fire extinguishers which had been identified as needing replacement imminently. Resolved 10 votes for, 0 against with 1 abstention (RL).

FC23/153 (IC)

To consider a request from a resident seeking approval for erection of a fence along the boundary of a parcel of land owned by the Town Council.

This matter is deemed confidential as it relates to a private matter involving a 3rd party.

It was proposed by Acting-Chair that Clerk be directed to correspond with the applicant to decline the request and to ask that the applicant remove the gate (already installed) and reinstate the fence and the ground immediately adjacent on the Council's property. Agreed. Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

FC23/154 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to the Axminster Guildhall; *to receive a report from the Clerk on several legal, governance, financial and constitutional matters that are considered confidential due to subject matter likely to be discussed.*

i) It was proposed by Acting-Chair, seconded by JW, that a second Unity Trust Bank current account was to be opened in the name of the Town Council (designated GH Ticket account) for the use by the Guildhall for the receipt of ticket sales. Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please action accordingly.

Continued overleaf.

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FC23/154 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to the Axminster Guildhall (continued):

ii) It was proposed by Acting-Chair, seconded by JW, that a UTB Corporate MultiPay Card be applied for with a nominal £1500 credit limit for use in conjunction with the Guildhall operation and governance. Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please action accordingly.

iii) After receiving a report from the Clerk on the legal position with regards to forming a new committee to administer and oversee the operation, finances and governance of the Guildhall venue, it was proposed by BS, seconded by DW, that a Guildhall Sub-Committee be formed with an initial membership of 7 Councillors all of whom would have voting rights, but with the ability to call upon 3rd parties to attend meetings and participate in discussions regarding the Guildhall (but with no voting rights). Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please action accordingly.

iv) It was proposed by JW, seconded by Acting-Chair, that the Town Council apply to EDDC to seek the transfer of the Guildhall Premises Licence to themselves. Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please action accordingly.

FC23/155 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to works vehicles and to decide upon the financial arrangements for the future provision of such vehicles; to receive a report from the Clerk on financial matters that are considered confidential due to subject matter likely to be discussed and the inclusion of commercially sensitive quotations.

It was proposed by Acting-Chair that expenditure of up to £1700 be approved to undertake repairs to the existing works vehicle prior to its return to the lease company. Matters relating to the repair to be duly delegated to the Clerk/RFO to arrange.

Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk/RFO: Please note and action accordingly.

It was further proposed by Acting-Chair, seconded by JW, that the Town Council seek to replace the existing vehicle with a larger, panel van on a 5year lease term, fully maintained, with annual mileage capped at 6000. This will enable greater flexibility regarding movement of plant and machinery around the town and storage/transit of materials when purchased. Cost – no more than £550 net per month. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk/RFO: Please note and action accordingly, arranging a credit line with a reputable lease finance company.

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FC23/156 (IC)

i) To consider matters pertaining to the disposal of Town Council plant assets and, concurrently, the acquisition of additional items of plant and equipment to provide operational efficiencies within the Town Council Grounds Maintenance service.

Clerk to provide a report to members which is deemed confidential in light of the commercially sensitive nature of the quotations to be considered.

Following review and discussion of the RFO's report on this matter, **it was proposed by JW, seconded by BS, that the disposal of the superfluous plant and equipment be progressed with as a matter of urgency and that the acquisition of the proposed plant and equipment as per RFO's assessment & report be approved. Resolved unanimously.**

Asset disposal value £19500 (est)

Replacement asset acquisition value £14000 (est)

Balance to be vired to the Town Council Asset Disposal Reserve Fund.

Clerk/RFO: Please note and action accordingly.

ii) To approve the suspension of Council's Financial Regulations for this asset disposal & procurement exercise in light of the urgency of the service requirement which prevents the standard compliance with those financial regulations (ie. RFO to endeavour to obtain three comparable quotes for the disposal & procurement exercise).

Proposed by Acting-Chair. Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

FC23/157 (IC)

To receive an updated report from the Clerk/RFO pertaining to the matter of potential land acquisition in the parish; as this subject matter relates to a commercially sensitive matter connected entirely with a private 3rd party land-owner, the following business will be considered in closed Council session (Part Two)

Report / update received from Clerk. No progress since last meeting. Discussions / negotiations continue with the 3rd party. Noted.

With no further business to deal with, the Chair closed the meeting at 9.10pm.

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Signed Date: 11th September 2023

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Held in person on Monday 10th July 2023 at 7.00 p.m.

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