

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 Employment Committee

DRAFT MINUTES – YET TO BE APPROVED; Part ONE version (redacted).

Held in person on Monday 18th September 2023 at 7pm.

Members present:

Chair: Cllr. Birnie (SB),
Cllrs. Farrow (JF) and Walden (JW). (Quorate).

Together with Clerk to the Council, Paul Hayward.

Chair welcomed all in attendance. Chair highlighted the building fire precautions and alerted those present to the fire exits.

Public Forum session.

No public speakers present.

Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.05pm

Part ONE business.

EC23/035

To note members of the Employment Committee present at the meeting:

As above. Meeting was quorate.

EC23/036

To receive and, if thought fit, to note the absence and to approve the reasons given for the absence: (LGA 1972 s.85(1))

Cllr. Leat (SL) sent her apologies as she was feeling unwell.

Cllr. Paice (EP) sent her apologies as she was feeling unwell.

Cllr. Steadman (BS) sent her apologies as she had a conflicting engagement.

JF proposed acceptance of these apologies for absence. Seconded by JW.

Resolved unanimously.

Continued overleaf.

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EC23/037

To note members of the committee who are neither present nor have given their apologies for absence:

None – all members of the committee either present or absent (with approval).

EC23/038

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.

This does not preclude the need for members to declare any additional interests that may arise during the meeting.

No declarations of interest offered by members in relation to the business on the agenda for consideration.

EC23/039

To consider and, if thought fit, approve the minutes of the Employment Committee meeting held 26th June 2023.

And to consider matters arising from those minutes not otherwise listed on this agenda.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by JW, that the minutes of that meeting be approved. Resolved. No matters arising from these minutes.

EC23/040

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 (see below).

No other matters to be considered in Part Two session other than that already listed on the agenda and the matter detailed above under EC23/048 to 051 inclusive.

EC23/041

To receive a report from the Clerk in relation to the revised Organisational Chart for Axminster Town Council (incorporating the Guildhall staff cohort);

Noted by members. Clerk was thanked for bringing this before the committee in light of recent staffing additions to the Town Council following the TUPE process relating to the Guildhall governance and management handover.

Continued overleaf.

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EC23/042

To receive a report from the Clerk on LGPS Pension Discretion Policy requirements and, if thought fit, to approve the declaration to the scheme trustees on behalf of ATC.

Report noted and reviewed. Clerk thanked for compiling and creating the new document.

It was proposed by JF, seconded by JW, that the Discretion Policy as reviewed be approved and the declaration submitted to LGPS/Peninsula Pensions accordingly. Resolved.

Clerk was asked to liaise with our retained HR consultant to seek their opinion on whether any alterations were recommended or necessary due to changing legislative framework. Noted.

EC23/043

To receive a training update report from the Clerk on staff training progress and anticipated future requirements; to consider request for two staff member attendances on the next available ICCM “Cemetery Management and Compliance” training event (virtual) at a cost of £185 per person (net). 5th and 6th December 2023 (first available date).

Proposed by Chair, seconded by JW, that the Town Council would cover the full training costs of £370 for this course for the two administrative staff officers identified. Resolved.

Clerk: Please arrange accordingly.

EC23/044

To receive a report from Clerk on the ongoing review of Employment Policies (via retained HR consultancy) and to consider whether this committee wishes to extend the review to include a draft Compassionate Leave Policy.

It was agreed that the Clerk should be directed to create a draft Compassionate Leave Policy in consultation with the retained HR consultancy. JF also asked that the previously considered draft Capability Policy (which is also out for consultation) should be brought before FULL Council as a Part Two discussion item as a matter of urgency; the draft version circulated to all members beforehand. Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

EC23/045

To consider any matters considered as urgent by the presiding Chair for discussion.

No matters raised by Chair for discussion or reference.

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EC23/046

To note the date of the next scheduled meeting of the committee.

A meeting in January 2024 was suggested by the Chair but members agreed that an extraordinary Meeting could be convened if there was business to be considered before that time. Clerk: Please note.

Clerk was also asked to prepare a calendar of dates for the 2024 meeting year and bring this to the November FULL Council ORD meeting on 13th November for members review and agreement. Noted

EC23/047

JF 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 JW. Resolved.

The Part One meeting recording was stopped and a separate recording commenced for Part Two.

Part TWO business.

Business to be considered in Part Two session; matters which are considered as confidential as they relate to Council employment.

EC23/048 (IC)

To receive an update on a matter pertaining to a former Council employee which requires the attention of the employment committee (exit interview review).

After review and debate, members agreed to note the contents of the transcript but stated that they felt the Council had not acted unreasonably in matters pertaining to the former employee's performance and job assessment. No further action proposed.

Continued overleaf.

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EC23/049 (IC)

To receive and review an updated “leave” summary for council employees (including GH personnel).

Reviewed and noted with thanks to the Clerk for preparing the data/report.

Members expressed their thanks to all staff for their hard work and diligence.

EC23/050 (IC)

To consider specific matters pertaining to employee job roles, terms and conditions, benefits, remuneration and superannuation and to resolve actions/decisions accordingly.

Four matters were raised, discussed and resolved upon as below:

a) It was proposed by JW, seconded by JF, that SJ's job title be amended from Council Administrator to Deputy Clerk to reflect her working duties, output and responsibilities. No SCP amendment was proposed as a result of this amendment to her job title, nor any change in contracted working hours or any other benefits. Resolved.

Clerk: please note and advise SJ accordingly. Please arrange for an amended/revised Contract of Employment to be drawn up and signed.

b)i) It was agreed that staff members could be provided with basic tea and coffee making facilities at the Guildhall, paid for by the Town Council as an administrative cost.

Proposed by JW, seconded by Chair. Two votes for, one against. Resolved.

b)ii) On the subject of additional non-financial employment benefits as outlined in the meeting briefing report, it was felt unanimously that the time was not right to consider anything further given the sensitive state of the Council's finances, the wider cost-of-living crisis and the potential negative implications and reputational damage to the Council.

No further action proposed.

c) GH/TUPE update from Clerk.

Noted with thanks. Any further matters relating to the Guildhall should be considered by the new Guildhall Sub-Committee (GHSC) in the first instance and then referred to EmployComm if felt necessary for a review/oversight prior to FULL Council approval/decision.

Continued overleaf.

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d) Guildhall employee contractual hours and works rota.

This matter was deferred to the GHSC for their consideration and discussion in the first instance. Members recognised that there would be an inevitable settling-in period following the transition from GMC to ATC and that some adjustments to GH staff rotas would be necessary as the building became busier and the Council's activities changed.

Noted. Clerk: please add to inaugural GHSC meeting agenda when drafted.

JF felt that it was too soon after the TC handover to consider any formal benchmarking exercises but asked Clerk to discuss with the retained HR consultant to see if any industry compatible programmes were available within the HR package we currently subscribe to. Noted.

EC23/051 (IC)

To receive a report from the Clerk on, and to consider matters with regards to, employment matters relating to performance reviews (appraisals) and to agree upon contractual remuneration uplifts for those employees within the framework of the NALC/NJC Pay Scale Agreement and to receive a report from the Clerk on the ongoing FY23-24 Pay Settlement negotiations (and their impact on the Council's finances in-year).

Clerk provided a summary of the last 12 months employee activity and performance reviews. Members asked Clerk to convey to all staff the Council's thanks, appreciation and congratulations on what had been achieved over that period, with the resources available and against the backdrop of a busy GH venue and an ever-increasing demand from residents for service delivery and amenity provision.

A suggestion was put forward that Council might wish to consider investigating the possibility of taking on an apprentice within the administrative team but this was not met with full agreement given the constraints on time, resource and finances currently.

The financial impact upon Council's financial budget was noted and approved.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by JW, that three salary enhancements (incremental rise) be applied (backdated to 1st April 2023) as a result of the recent Employee Performance Reviews:

The details of these salary payments are redacted for confidential/GDPR purposes.

Clerk: please convey the committee's decision to the staff concerned and draw up the relevant pay advice statements for signing and retention in the employee files.

At this point of the meeting, the Clerk was asked to leave the room while the members considered his remuneration and Performance Review.

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Upon his return, Clerk was advised that a unanimous decision * of the Employment Committee had resolved to apply a single point salary (SCP) incremental rise after review and consideration of the Clerk's Annual Performance Review (Appraisal). The financial impact upon Council's financial budget was noted and approved. Clerk thanked members for their consideration and decision.

** proposed by Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.*

The details of this salary payment is redacted for confidential/GDPR purposes.

With no further items to discuss, the Chair closed the meeting at 8.10pm.

Signed Date:

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