

AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PIPPINS COMMITTEE

Held at Axminster Guildhall on Wednesday, 26th April 2017 at 7.30 p.m.

The meeting was preceded by a tour of the building so that members could view the improvements which had been achieved by volunteers.

1. PRESENT : Cllrs. J.W. Walden, B.R. Watson, A.L. Young and the Town Clerk.
No members of the press or public.

2. APOLOGIES : Cllrs. C.A. Doherty, G.S. Godbeer, P.G. Hayward, and L.A. Rowe.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM:: the Chairman explained who the present users were. The building is now in use throughout the week.

4. PUBLIC FORUM: None.

5. SITUATION IN RESPECT OF DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL LEASE:

At present the Town Council has signed a Tenancy at Will from which it can withdraw at any point. A formal lease would require more commitment. The Town Clerk had been in touch with the firm which manages Devon County Council properties to try to arrange a meeting to move matters forward now that the situation seemed to be clearer. The relevant officer at Devon County Council had retired and a response from her successor was awaited. It was agreed that once the County Council elections were over then the Chairman would brief the new County Councillor on the situation and try to arrange a meeting with the relevant personnel to move the matter forward with a view to the Town Council taking on the freehold of the building.

Cllr. Young expressed concerns regarding the drain on resources that future maintenance could be. Cllr. Walden said that a condition survey would be necessary but that this should not be done until it was known whether the Devon County Council would grant the freehold.

The Town Clerk said that she was hoping to have meetings with two other officers from Devon County Council at which the situation regarding Pippins would be discussed and would find out whether there any variation in the Tenancy at Will would be necessary as some groups wished to be lessees rather than hirers.

She will ascertain whether it would possible for a consortium of community groups to put in an expression of interest with a view to taking on the building themselves directly from Devon County Council. She said that the users all satisfied the requirement that they be community groups.

Cllr. Walden said that he was in the process of trying to prepare a lease which could be discussed with the Town Council's solicitors. He said that fourteen days prior to any agreement with prospective tenants being concluded they would need to be sent notification that any lease excluded Landlord and Tenant Rights and would, in effect be a short assured tenancy.

Cllr. Young questioned what the situation might be should a consortium not take on the building. Cllr. Walden said that the Town Council could be in a situation where it owned the building and would have to be fully responsible for all upkeep, with the accommodation being hired out. Cllr. Young said that the Town Council needed to be careful not to take on more than it could cope with in terms of assets. The Town Clerk said that she felt that a full structural survey should be commissioned before the Town Council took on ownership of the building.

Cllr. Walden said that the possibility of extending the Tenancy At Will should be investigated rather than entering into a full lease agreement. The Town Council is liable for all services and rates as well as repairs. Cllr. Walden felt that without the organizations accommodated at Pippins, which would have nowhere else to go, then the community as a whole would be much less well served.

6. LEASES FOR TENANTS: this was covered in the discussion of the previous agenda item.

7. CONDITIONS OF HIRE AND BOOKING FORMS: the Town Clerk and Cllr. Young will draft these.

8. MAINTENANCE MATTERS: the Town Clerk suggested that the same principle as applied at the Guildhall be used at Pippins, namely twice yearly inspections during which maintenance and risk assessment matters are logged.

a) Internal – considerable internal repainting had been done by volunteers with the Town Council providing materials.

b) External – some repainting will be done by volunteers.

c) Grounds – western area will have some raised beds put in. Town Handyman strims grass area to the east. Cllr. Young expressed concerns about the dip at the entrance caused by a tree root. Cllr. Watson asked about the garage. Cllr. Walden said that in the long term, following the purchase of Green Lodge by Devon County Council, there was the potential for Stoney Lane to be widened, which would require the re-siting of the garage.

Cllr. Walden said that he had done a Fire Risk Assessment. First Aid provision is in place. Hirers should be advised that they need to have insurance cover and appropriate certification (such as food hygiene qualifications) for their activities as distinct for matters which are covered by the Town Council's activities.

Signed Date

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