

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

Held at the Guildhall, on Monday 10th June 2019 at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Town Mayor: Cllr. A.L. Young
Deputy Mayor: Cllr. D.J. Moore
Councillors: C.A. Doherty, Ms. J. Farrow, M. Featherstone, D.R.H. Hull,
Mrs. S.L.N. Leat, M. Mynard, M.D.G. Spurway and J.W. Walden

The Town Clerk (Miss H. Kirkcaldie) and the Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer (Mrs. Z. Adamson-Drage).

In attendance: Cty./Dist. Cllr. I.L. Hall, Dist. Cllrs. S.L. Jackson and A.T. Moulding.

16 Members of the public. 0 representative of the Press.

2019/0213 APOLOGIES: A.E. Bourner.

2019/0214 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: CLLRS. DOHERTY, FARROW, HULL, LEAT, MOORE, MYNARD AND SPURWAY EACH DECLARED PERSONAL INTERESTS AS BEING MEMBERS OF THE AXMINSTER GUILDHALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE IN RESPECT OF ANY ITEMS RELATING TO THE GUILDHALL.

CLLR. YOUNG, IN HER CAPACITY AS GUILDHALL MANAGER FOR WHICH SHE DECLARES A PECUNIARY INTEREST, HAS A DISPENSATION TO SPEAK ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE GUILDHALL PROVIDED THE PECUNIARY INTEREST IS NOT OF OVER-RIDING SIGNIFICANCE.

CLLR. WALDEN DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF AXMINSTER COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE.

CLLR. WALDEN DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNORS OF AXE VALLEY ACADEMY AS A MEMBER OF AXMINSTER SKATEPARK STEERING GROUP, AXMINSTER TWINNING ASSOCIATION AND AS BEING SAFEGUARDING LEAD FOR AXMINSTER YOUTH CLUB.

2019/0215 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 13TH MAY 2019: Councillors asked that the following correction be made:

Minute 2019/0180, penultimate section to read “E.D.A.C.F. – Cllr. Hull” not “D.A.C.F. – Cllr. Hall”

Minute 2019/0190 to read “75th Anniversary of D-Day Landings” not “80th Anniversary”

Having had it confirmed by her fellow Councillors that the minutes were accurate following these amendments, Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Spurway proposed that the minutes as amended be approved and adopted as Council policy. Agreed.

2019/0216 TOWN FORUM – MAINTENANCE OF VERGES: a member of the public

sought clarification regarding which authorities were responsible for maintaining which verges around the town. The Town Mayor said that the Town Council was endeavouring to establish this. Dist. Cllr. Moulding said that most of the responsibility lay with Devon County Council and that where verges were cut back it was usually for safety reasons.

2019/0217 TOWN FORUM – JUBILEE FIELD: a member of the public expressed his disgust regarding the state of this field and the play area there. He felt that developers promised the earth and delivered little. The Mayor concurred and said that the Town Council would not take the field on until it was satisfied that it was in an acceptable state. The Town Council will urge the District Council to put more pressure on the developer. Cllr. Leat asked that the District Councillors should do the same.

2019/0218 TOWN FORUM – PLANNING APPLICATION 19/1074/MOUT: a resident asked whether any clarification had been given regarding the status of the funding for the road. He said that he felt the application was premature and should not be considered without works to resolve the problems at Weycroft Bridge and the right turn from Lyme Road on to the A35. He felt that the steep, deep curve was a poor design. He questioned the accuracy of the figures on which the justification for the numbers of houses to be built in Devon had been based, citing the evidence quoted by the Council for the Preservation of Rural England as a counter.

A different resident said that three applications relating to the road had been submitted. That from Crown Estates drew on research undertaken for the submission by Persimmon Homes. He said that the design would lead to an increase in the traffic through the town centre. He considered that the traffic assessment was substandard for what has been applied for and felt that the planning authority could lay itself open to challenge if a decision was made on the information submitted.

2019/0219 PLANNING APPLICATION 19/1074/MOUT: Planning Committee Chairman, Cllr. Mrs. Leat sought comments from her fellow Councillors. Cllr. Walden felt that that the points raised by the local resident regarding the traffic assessment should be borne in mind and gave sound grounds for objection at this stage. He said that the Town Council had always felt that the road should be considered in its entirety and pointed out that the Crown Estate would sell off its land to a developer. He added that until the situation regarding the relief road is determined other matters should be left in abeyance.

Cllr. Featherstone expressed the view that Weycroft Bridge and the junction at the A35 were the key issues and that any relief road should be routed down the Axe Valley.

Cllr. Mrs. Leat said that she agreed with the points raised by Cllr. Walden.

Cllr. Walden made a formal proposal that Axminster Town Council objects to this planning application for the following reasons:

- a) that the details supplied regarding the traffic implications are inadequate.
- b) that it should only be considered in conjunction with the applications from Persimmon Homes.
- c) that no work should be undertaken until the financing of the road was absolutely clear.

Cllr. Moore seconded the proposal, which was carried.

AT THIS POINT, CLLR. YOUNG SAID THAT IN ORDER TO EXPEDITE THE BUSINESS OF TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS SHE HAD DECIDED, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE TOWN CLERK, THAT REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE ONLY ON THE WEBSITE OR IF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC REQUESTED COPIES AT THE OFFICE. CLLR. WALDEN EXPRESSED HIS UNHAPPINESS AT THIS DECISION.

2019/0220 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13TH MAY: None.

2019/0221 MATTERS OF URGENCY: None.

2019/0222 MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13TH MAY 2019: Cllr. Mrs. Leat, seconded by Cllr. Doherty, proposed that these be approved and adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2019/0223 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 13TH MAY 2019: None.

2019/0224 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING WITH TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 20TH MAY 2019: Cllr. Mrs. Leat, seconded by Cllr. Doherty, proposed that these be approved and adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2019/0225 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING WITH TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 20TH MAY 2019: None.

2019/0226 BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29TH APRIL 2019: Cllr. Farrow pointed out that minute 11 should be corrected to read “Cllrs. Spurway, Mynard and Farrow” not Cllrs. Spurway, Mynard and Fellows.

Subject to that correction, Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that these minutes be approved and adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2019/0227 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28TH MAY 2019: None.

2019/0228 EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 30TH MAY 2019: Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Spurway proposed that these minutes were an accurate record of the meeting and that they be approved and adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2019/0029 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 30TH MAY 2019: None.

2019/0229 FINANCIAL MATTERS – APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS FOR MAY: Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Doherty, proposed that these payments be approved. Agreed.

2019/0230 FINANCIAL MATTERS – BANK RECONCILIATION FOR MARCH: the Responsible Financial Officer explained that following advice from the internal auditor a slight adjustment in the year end bank reconciliation had been made.

2019/0231 FINANCIAL MATTERS – REPORTING OF ANY ITEMS APPROVED FOR EXPENDITURE BY TOWN MAYOR OR COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN:

i Purchase of Green Book – the Deputy Clerk explained that this was necessary given the increase in staff numbers. A cost of £456 had been quoted but it was not known whether this was a one-off cost or an annual subscription. Once this information has been established it will be emailed out to Councillors and a decision taken based on responses received.

ii Purchase of Payroll Manager Software – the Town Mayor said that she had approved this expenditure to facilitate handling of the monthly payroll procedures in light of the increase in staff numbers. The cost will be £72

2019/0232 FINANCIAL MATTERS – RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER’S REPORT: the Responsible Financial Officer said that she had continued her work on the annual return.

She added that she was working on updating the bank account signatories and would check with the bank what was happening.

She re-iterated her concern regarding Risk Management discussion as she felt that this was not being handled directly by the full Town Council as a whole but via a Committee. She therefore felt that a negative response should be given to that assertion.

Cllr. Walden felt that there was no point in having a Risk Committee if the business had to be discussed by the full Council. He therefore felt that a “yes” response should be given.

Cllr. Young felt that the wording was quite specific and that the Responsible Financial Officer’s advice should be heeded. Cllr. Leat said that all Councillors needed to be fully aware of what risk is involved and that it is understood by them.

Cllr. Young proposed that the Responsible Financial Officer’s Advice should be followed. Cllr. Mynard seconded the proposal. Carried.

2019/0233 FINANCIAL MATTERS – CONSIDERATION OF PART 1 OF ANNUAL RETURN:

The Deputy Town Clerk had circulated her draft responses to the assertions set out in Part 1 of the annual return. A negative response was made to assertion 5 and positive responses to the other assertions between 1 and 8.

She went through each statement and discussed the reasons for her responses. At the conclusion of this process. Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Young proposed that the responses made be approved.

2019/0234 UPDATE ON SECTION 106 MONEY PROJECTS: nothing to report.

2019/0235 FORWARD PLANNING - HEALTH AND SAFETY REVIEW: the Town Mayor said that this was on-going as staff numbers increase.

2019/0236 FORWARD PLANNING – GLYPHOSATE WEEDKILLER: the Town Mayor said that this is used by the Town Council staff but on an intermittent basis and with proper personal protective equipment. She said that an alternative was being tried this year. Cllr. Featherstone offered to look into what alternatives might be available. Cllr. Mynard highlighted the need for up to date training in use of hazardous substances. Cllr. Walden mentioned possible impacts of weedkillers on pets and wildlife.

2019/0237 CORRESPONDENCE:

- a. Letters Received
 - i. Re article for Axminster Voice.
 - ii. Blood on the Carpet – proposed Crime Festival. THE TOWN CLERK WILL CONTACT THE ORGANISER TO ARRANGE A MEETING.
- b. Meetings
 - i. L.A.G. meeting 4th July
- c. Reports Received - the following reports are available for consultation in the office:
 - i. Health Watch Voices

The Deputy Mayor 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. Cllr. Spurway seconded the proposal. Agreed.

2019/0238 STAFFING MATTERS: the Town Clerk reported discussions with a colleague from another Town Council regarding spare capacity and possible shared use of maintenance staff. Following discussion the feeling was that it would be better for the employment relationship to be direct than at one remove. The Town Mayor felt it would be an overly complicated arrangement.

Health and Safety training for new and existing staff will be sourced either as on line courses or direct training events as appropriate to ensure that it is up to date. Bicton and Devon County Council offer various courses.

2019/0239 BAD DEBTS: Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden proposed that bad debts to the sum of £270 be written off in preparation for the Annual Audit. Agreed.

2019/0240 QUOTATIONS RECEIVED – OLD COURTHOUSE ELECTRICAL WORKS: Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that all necessary electrical works be undertaken even although the contractor had indicated that the price would not be known until work commenced for some items. Agreed on grounds of health and safety.

2019/0241 QUOTATIONS RECEIVED – PRINTING AND TECHNOLOGY PROPOSALS

The Deputy Clerk had circulated updated purchase and service costs from a company used for many years by the local secondary school. Initially the approach had been in relation to a printer copier but prices had also been sought for a wider range of services including computers and data security services.

There was discussion regarding the possibilities of outright purchase of some elements of the requirement and leasing of others. Leased equipment would be owned outright after 5 years. Costs had been allocated pro-rata as between the Town Council and the Guildhall Management Committee.

Cllr. Walden felt that it would be cheaper to buy the equipment outright immediately. He asked how the service element would be affected by the current contract with the website provider and was told this covered different provision.

There was discussion regarding the hosting of emails and whether there would be benefits in transferring that to the new supplier in the long term.

Cllr. Walden proposed that the equipment be bought at the best price and consideration be given to changing web-site provider in due course.

Cllr. Farrow said that there needs to be a way of simplifying things. She felt a piecemeal approach was unwise.

Cllr. Young said that the technical expert had explained things well to the office staff. She seconded Cllr. Walden's proposal.

There was further discussion and it was agreed that the figures be reviewed and re-issued before a decision was finalised. Agreed.

Cllr. Spurway asked whether the package included a new computer for the Guildhall Management Committee. Cllr. Young said that it was a matter for the Guildhall Management Committee.

The Town Clerk said that it was intended to hold induction sessions for Councillors once all were in place which would include matters such as use of email.

2019/0242 QUOTATIONS RECEIVED – CLEARANCE OF ALLOTMENT PLOTS: the Town Clerk advised that this would be done as soon as the contractor was available.

2019/0243 QUOTATIONS RECEIVED – CEMETERY STRIMMER: Cllr. Spurway reported on the current state of the cemetery grass maintenance equipment. Contractors had advised that those items which had been out of order could be repaired and this was now in hand.

2019/0244 QUOTATIONS RECEIVED – CLOSED CIRCUIT TELEVISION: the Town Clerk said that there was nothing to report on this matter.

2019/0245 TENANCY MATTERS: None to be raised.

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