

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

Held at the Guildhall, on Monday 14th October 2019 at 7.00 p.m.

Present:

Town Mayor: Cllr. A.L. Young
Deputy Mayor: Cllr. D.J. Moore
Councillors: Cllr. A.E. Bourner, C.A. Doherty,
M. Featherstone, D.R.H. Hull, M. Mynard,
Mrs. A. G. Sedgewick, M.D.G. Spurway, J.W. Walden and P. Wales.

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

In attendance: County/District Councillor Hall and District Councillor Jackson
9 Members of the public. 1 representative of the Press.

2019/0378 APOLOGIES: Cllrs. M.N. Adamson-Drage, Ms. J.J. Farrow, Mrs. S.L.N. Leat and Dist. Cllr. A.T. Moulding.

2019/0379 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: CLLRS. BOURNER, DOHERTY, HULL, MOORE, SPURWAY AND WALES 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. HULL DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF AN ORGANISATION WHICH HIRED THE SENIOR CITIZENS' CENTRE.

CLLR. SPURWAY DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF THE MANAGEMENT TEAM AT CLOAKHAM LAWN SPORTS CENTRE.

2019/0380 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 9th SEPTEMBER 2019: Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Bourner, proposed that these be approved as a true record of the proceedings. Agreed. Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Cllr. Bourner, proposed that these be adopted as Council policy. Agreed.

2019/0381 TOWN FORUM – CLOSURE OF OLD COURTHOUSE GARDEN: a local resident questioned the Town Clerk regarding the closure of this garden outside the trading hours of the tenants and without notice to the public. The Town Clerk stated that this had been done following instances of dog fouling and that this had been done on previous occasions when Council had deemed it necessary. The procedure followed on this occasion had been no different from that applied on previous occasions.

Cllr. Walden pointed out that when the garden had first been opened to the public it had always been closed over night.

The member of the public said that she preferred to go into the garden when commercial activity had ceased.

Cllr. Hull confirmed what Cllr Walden had said and added that he was concerned about the risk posed to young children by the presence of dog fouling in the garden.

Objecting to the tone in which the member of the public had questioned the Town Clerk, he proposed that the meeting move on to the next business. Cllr. Walden seconded the proposal. Agreed.

2019/0382 TOWN FORUM – URGENT REQUEST FOR FUNDING FOR LIGHT UP

AXMINSTER: A member of the public presented her case for the Town Council to consider, as a matter of urgency, providing funding towards this group as the existing grant funding was coming to an end and without further funding the work being done by the group on preparing a Community Plan would cease.

2019/0383 TOWN FORUM – REQUEST FOR ENHANCEMENT OF MEMORIAL ON

FIRST AVENUE: a local resident, descended from one of the first families to take up residence at Millwey Rise following the departure of the American service personnel after the Second World War, asked for consideration to be given to the provision of a flower bed and perhaps a flowering tree around and beside the memorial. He had drawn up a plan of what he envisaged and added that there were volunteers prepared to do the spade work. Town Councillors welcomed his suggestion but it was pointed out that the permission of the District Council would have to be sought before any work could be undertaken. The Chairman of Amenities said that he was sure that the additional planting could be provided from those plants already ordered.

2019/0384 TOWN FORUM – POT HOLES AT RAILWAY STATION: a resident welcomed the fact that some remedial action had been taken regarding these but added that there was room for further improvement.

2019/0385 TOWN FORUM – POLICY ON WEEDKILLER: a resident stated that the local attempts to enhance the town centre were being undermined by the failure of other authorities to deal with the weeds which infested most parts of the town. The Town Mayor said that the Town Council was well aware of the problems and had taken on a lengthsman in order to try to resolve them. Regrettably, the lengthsman had sustained an injury which had kept him off work for the past two months and he was only able to undertake light duties at the moment. It was hoped to get on top of the problem next year, although it was still necessary to source the highway safety training appropriate for him to operate in areas outside the 30 m.p.h. speed limit. Finding out who was responsible for which areas of verge was an on-going exercise which would be aided if the Town Council decided to buy the new mapping package demonstrated to them the previous week. Cllr. Walden said that it was the policy of both County and District to spray only where the kerb meets the pavement. Cty. Cllr. Hall said that Lyme Road would have been the responsibility of the County Council but such work had been discontinued. Cllr. Hull said that often gullies were not swept because

the sweeper could not get into the kerbside because of the presence of parked cars. It would be helpful if the Town Council could be alerted to when the sweeper was coming so that no parking bollards could be put out. Cllr. Hall said that he had been pushing for a change in County Council policy as residents perceived the policy of allowing weeds to grow unchecked was storing up more expensive problems for the future and to reverse it would do much to improve residents feeling of well-being.

2019/0386 TOWN FORUM – MATTERS RELATING TO THE DEVELOPMENT AT DUKES WAY AND THE JUBILEE FIELD: a resident had requested an update on recent new building at the above site and regarding any legal action taken by the District Council regarding the Jubilee Field. Cllr. Walden stated that action could be taken only by the District Council. Contact will be made with the District Council to find out whether any legal action has been successful.

Dist. Cllr. Jackson, who declared a personal interest as a resident of that part of Axminster, said that she thought that the new buildings did have the benefit of planning permission but that the problem may relate to noise from the construction process. She added that she had not heard any further information regarding legal action from the Section 106 Officer.

CLLR. YOUNG PROPOSED THAT AGENDA ITEM 9h REFERRING TO THE REQUEST FOR FUNDING FROM LIGHT UP AXMINSTER BE BROUGHT FORWARD FOR CONSIDERATION AT THIS POINT. AGREED.

2019/0387 FINANCIAL MATTERES - REQUEST FOR FUNDING FROM LIGHT UP AXMINSTER: The Responsible Financial Officer suggested that the Town Improvement Fund and the Community Benefit Fund may be earmarked funds from which a grant could be made. She pointed out that the application had not been made on the requisite form.

Cllr. Walden spoke of the recent pressures the on resources of higher authorities and how these had resulted in the withdrawal of many services which, though non-statutory, were vital for the well-being of many residents. He mentioned services, such as the provision of floral displays, the provision of which had been picked up by the Town Council. He said that the Town Council had neither the capacity nor the specialist skill-set to deal with challenges such as drug dependence, poverty, alcohol abuse and lack of social mobility in terms of health and well-being. He said that what money higher authorities did have available was spread ever more thinly. He said that the local towns, such as Axminster, needed to have Community Development Officers to help create vital networks for these groups, linking the professional and voluntary sectors. He said that Axminster was fortunate to have somebody with the right skill set living in the town.

He went on to say that he understood that the £60,000, spread over three years, which had been requested to continue undertaking the community development work was a considerable sum.

He proposed that £8500 be allocated, paid in two instalments, from 1st November to 31st March 2019 and that further funding be considered during the budgeting process for

the next year, subject to due diligence being carried out. Cllr. Hull supported this proposal.

The Responsible Financial Officer interjected to point out that the money requested represented 8% of the annual precept.

Cllr. Sedgewick proposed an amendment to Cllr. Walden's proposal to enable a working party or committee to look into how the work of Light Up Axminster and the Town Council might complement each other.

Cllr. Walden signified his willingness to accept the amendment.

The Town Mayor then summed up the discussion by stating that the combined proposal from Cllrs. Walden and Sedgewick was that £8500 in funding be approved to carry Light Up Axminster through to the end of the present financial year with a joint working party with Light Up Axminster to consider funding going forward from then. Cllr. Bourner seconded the proposal, which was carried. Cllr. Wales voted against the proposal.

2019/0388 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9th SEPTEMBER 2019: None.

2019/0389 CO-OPTION OF ADDITIONAL MEMBER FOR RAYMONDS HILL: No applications had been received.

2019/0390 MATTERS OF URGENCY – PROPOSED CLOSURE OF LYME STREET AND SOUTH STREET IN FEBRUARY TO ENABLE REPAIRS TO THE GAS DISTRIBUTION NETWORK: A report was given of a meeting held with various stakeholders regarding what was proposed and the impact it would have on traffic movements in the town. Local stakeholders were able to input many pertinent points and the traffic order will be revised in the light of these suggestions. A public drop in meeting will be held in late November or early December and prior consultations will be held with residents and businesses who will be directly affected.

2019/0391 MATTERS OF URGENCY – REQUEST FOR GRANT FOR AXMINSTER CHRISTMAS TOGETHER:

CLLR. HULL DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING LIKELY TO ATTEND THIS EVENT.

Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Bourner, proposed that a grant of £500 be made. Agreed.

2019/0392 REPORT OF CEMETERY WORKING PARTY: this was held over to the next meeting.

2019/0393 MINUTES OF PLANNING WITH TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9th SEPTEMBER 2019: the accuracy of the minutes having been confirmed, Cllr. Wales, member of the Committee proposed, seconded by Cllr. Mynard, that these be approved. Agreed. Cllr. Wales, seconded by Cllr. Walden, then proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2019/0394 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING WITH TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 12th AUGUST 2019: None.

2019/0395 REPORT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY ON VARIOUS DATES IN SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER 2019: these were noted and thanks expressed to Dist. Cllr. Jackson for her support.

2019/0396 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 30TH SEPTEMBER 2019: Cllr. Mynard pointed out that at 6i the location of the bus stop was Lyme Road not Lyme Street. This correction having been made, Cllr. Mynard, seconded by Cllr. Wales, proposed that these minutes be adopted as an accurate record. Cllr. Wales, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that they be adopted as Council policy.

2019/0397 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 30TH SEPTEMBER 2019: None.

2019/0398 MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 30TH SEPTEMBER 2019: it was pointed out that the comments for applications 19/1931 and 19/1936 had been transposed. This correction having been made, Cllr. Wales, seconded by Cllr. Mynard, proposed that they be adopted as a true record of the meeting. Agreed. Cllr. Wales, seconded by Cllr. Young proposed that they be adopted as Council policy. Agreed.

2019/0399 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 30TH SEPTEMBER 2019: None.

2019/0400 BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27TH AUGUST 2019: The Town Clerk apologised that there were several errors in this document which she had sent out originally before having had time to proof read them but had since updated in terms of the numbering. At 8biii the end of a sentence had been omitted which should have read “has been diverted into an existing drain rather than into the flower bed.” These corrections having been made, Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Wales, proposed that they be adopted as a true and accurate record of the meeting. Agreed. Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Wales, proposed that they be adopted as Council policy. Agreed.

2019/0400 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 30TH SEPTEMBER 2019: The Town Clerk gave a report on a meeting she and the Deputy Clerk had had with someone who was prepared to move forward the project on the Guildhall foyer doors and the stage ceiling which had come to a halt following the unexpected retiral of the Town Council’s consultant surveyor.

2019/0401 FINANCIAL MATTERS – APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS FOR AUGUST: Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Bourner, proposed that these be approved. Agreed.

2019/0402 FINANCIAL MATTERS – APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS FOR SEPTEMBER:
Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Moore, proposed that these be approved. Agreed.

2019/0403 FINANCIAL MATTERS – REPORTING OF ANY ITEMS APPROVED FOR EXPENDITURE BY TOWN MAYOR OR COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN – WACKER PLATE: the Town Clerk said that she had discussed a suitable level of compactor for use when mending potholes and would be purchasing one shortly using available grant funding.

2019/0404 FINANCIAL MATTERS - EXTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT: the Responsible Financial Officer said that the external auditor had accepted the explanations given by the Town Council for the no response to one of the questions on the audit return but emphasised that this was because it had indicated that appropriate remedial action was proposed to address the short coming regarding risk management in the coming year. She said that she was working on the risk management policy and would present it to Council as soon as she had completed her work.

In response to a question from Cllr. Wales, the Deputy Clerk said that the inbuilt security checks on the computers would scan any devices plugged into Council computing equipment.

2019/0405 QUARTERLY BUDGET REPORT: the Responsible Financial Officer said that there were no matters of concern. She said that some items which appeared to be above average, such as telephony costs could be explained as one-off exceptional items. Looking forward to the budget for the coming year she said that one cost centre which would need a bigger budget allocation was that for the Outdoor Team.

2019/0406 FINANCIAL MATTERS - ALLOTMENT RENTS FOR 2020-2021: the Deputy Clerk said that the Town Council's rents were considerably cheaper than those in some other areas, so represented good value for tenants. Although no special projects had been proposed, more frequent checks on the trees would be needed for safety reasons. Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Young, proposed that the rent for whole plots be increased by two pounds and that for half-plots by one pound. Agreed.

2019/0407 RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT: The Deputy Clerk said that she was now working on preparation for the budget. The submission for pension re-enrolment was being undertaken. Preparing the Risk Management Policy was a large item of work.

2019/0408 GRANT REQUEST FROM AXMINSTER CHRISTMAS TOGETHER:

CLLR. HULL DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS INTENDING TO BE PRESENT AT THIS EVENT.

Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Sedgewick, proposed that a grant of £500 be made. Agreed.

2019/0409 FINANCIAL MATTERS – BUDGET FOR ENVIRONMENT DAY: The Town Clerk had circulated a briefing note to all Councillors. Cllr. Walden, seconded by

Cllr. Bourner, proposed that the budget be set at £1000. Agreed.

2019/0410 LETTER FROM DISTRICT COUNCIL REGARDING EMPTY HOMES:

speaking on behalf of Cllr. Farrow, the Town Clerk said that Cllr. Farrow suggested that the public should alert the District Council to any houses which are standing empty.

2019/0411 NEW-COMERS' COFFEE MORNING: Cllr. Young suggested that a coffee morning be held for people new to the town. Cllr. Walden said that this should be done 4 times a year. Further thought will be given to this idea.

2019/0412 FUTURE PLANS – PROPOSALS FOR RISK MANAGEMENT: The Deputy Clerk had circulated a briefing paper for the information of Councillors. She said that a Risk Register should be prepared and reviewed annually by the full Town Council but that some of the work feeding into that document could be undertaken by the Risk Management and other Committees. Strategic Risks should be considered only by the full Town Council.

The following Councillors agreed to form a working party in the first instance: Cllrs. Mynard, Sedgewick, Spurway, Young and Farrow.

2019/0413 CORRESPONDENCE :

- a. Letters Received.
 - i. Letter of thanks from Nourish.
- b. Meetings
 - i. 24th October - Working Together for the Future of East Devon.
CLLR. WALDEN RECOMMENDED THIS EVENT TO NEW COUNCILLORS.
- c. Reports Received - the following reports are available for consultation in the office:

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. Walden seconded the proposal. Agreed.

2019/0414 STAFFING MATTERS – EQUIPMENT FOR LENGTHSMAN: The Deputy Town Clerk said that Lyme Regis Town Council had just taken delivery of an electric vehicle and said that an offer had been made for members and staff in Axminster to see it. Points raised in discussion included the need to have a tow bar and for the vehicle to be closed to ensure safety of equipment. Cllr. Featherstone offered to make further investigations. Many Councillors felt that hybrid vehicles were a better option at present as there were few charging points for electric vehicles.

2019/0415 STAFFING MATTERS – TRAINING: all staff will be undertaking a bespoke range of training relating to Health and Safety early in December.

2019/0416 QUOTES TO CONSIDER –UPGRADE OF SECURITY CAMERA SYSTEM AT GUILDHALL: Nothing to report.

2019/0417 QUOTES TO CONSIDER –ELECTRICITY CONTRACT: the Deputy Clerk had circulated some further information. Councillors asked that further details be sought as to the percentage of power generated by green methods.

2019/0418 QUOTES TO CONSIDER –REPLACEMENT OF FAULTY WATER HEATER AT THE FORMER MUSEUM: Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Young, proposed that the quote in the sum of £654 be accepted. Agreed.

2019/0419 TENANCY MATTERS - LEASES: The Town Clerk said there was nothing to report at present.

Signed Date.....

