

AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT 7.00 p.m. ON MONDAY, 29TH JULY 2019 AT THE GUILDHALL

1. PRESENT: Cllr. A.L.Young (Town Mayor), Cllr. C.A. Doherty, Cllr. J.J. Farrow, Cllr. D.R.H. Hull, Cllr. Mrs. S.L.N.Leat, Cllr M. Mynard, Cllr. A. Sedgewick, Cllr. M.D.G. Spurway, the Town Clerk and the Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer. 1 member of the public, 0 representative of the press.

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

CLLRS. HULL, MYNARD AND SEDGEWICK EACH DECLARED PERSONAL INTERESTS BY VIRTUE OF THEIR CONNECTIONS WITH THE GROUP CALLED NOURISH AXMINSTER WHICH HAD APPLIED FOR A GRANT.

2. APOLOGIES: Cllr. D.J. Moore (Deputy Mayor), Cllr. M. Adamson-Drage, Cllr. A.E. Bourner, Cllr. M. Featherstone and Cllr. J.W. Walden.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING: None.

4. PUBLIC FORUM:- A member of the public asked that the cigarette bins in front of the Guildhall be replaced as they were defective.

Referring to the agenda item relating to purchase of a new water bowser he said that, speaking as one of the volunteers who uses this, he felt that the capacity of the present bowser was insufficient to enable all the plants to be watered with one fill of the tank and that it was time-consuming to fill it up in the middle of the job. He said that fill time would be quicker if the bowser could be filled from a water source with a wider diameter pipe than those being used at present.

Regarding the agenda item relating to discussion of a vehicle for the new lengthsman, he questioned the need for an additional vehicle, given that the Town Council has two tractors already. He suggested that a new, larger bowser could be mounted on a vehicle such as a Kawasaki mule or a John Deere Gator which would be cheap to insure and tax,

The Town Mayor thanked him for his comments and proposed that the agenda item relating to the water bowser be brought forward for discussion at this point. Agreed.

5. AMENITIES – NEW WATER BOWSER: The Town Mayor said that the Town Council realised that the watering process was time consuming and that the regular commitment needed was an unfair imposition on the volunteers. For that reason the intention is that it form part of the remit of the newly appointed lengthsman and had been discussed with him during the interview process. It would be possible for the bowser to be filling up while another job was being undertaken. Discussions had been had with the Handyman and Lengthsman regarding what vehicle was felt to best meet their needs and the response had been that a van would be most suitable.

Cllr. Hull suggested that a sub-committee might be set up of non-Councillors to give advice on these items. He said that the flowers made the town attractive to residents and visitors in the summer.

6 .FINANCIAL MATTERS:

a) Quarterly Report on Progress Against Budget – the Responsible Financial Officer said that in broad terms the Council was on budget in respect of Income but slightly over budget as regards expenditure. The areas which were particularly over budget were employment advertising, as a result of the re-advertising of the

lengthsman post; telephony, as a result of the switch over to the new system and Handyman equipment as a result of the need to repair the hydraulic system on one tractor.

b) Grant Request – a request had been received from Nourish Axminster for a grant towards the provision of food during the school holidays for those who would be entitled to free school meals during the term time. Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr.Farrow, proposed that a donation of £1500 be made from unallocated Section 137 funding. Agreed.

c) Electricity Supply – the Deputy Clerk said that she had been investigating alternative energy suppliers using an energy broker which works with 46 different suppliers. She had mentioned the Town Council's interest in greener energy.

6. PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS – GUILDHALL:

i) Update on Works Required: - a detailed quote had now been received in respect of the sliding doors. Two further quotes were still needed. The consultant surveyor had reminded other contractors regarding quotes for works to the stage walls and ceiling.

Servicing of the water heater in the kitchen and the emergency lighting system will take place shortly. Portable appliance tests are also due..

7 . PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS – OLD COURTHOUSE

i) General Update on Repairs – the roofing repairs were still to be done. A third quote is awaited for external decoration. The DO NOT FEED THE BIRDS signage had been ordered and those providing bird feeders will be advised that these will now only be permitted between 1st November and 31st March..

ii) Museum – the Town Clerk outlined the various options which might need to be considered in respect of future use of the courtroom and had approached the consultant surveyor regarding works required to subdivide that into smaller lettable spaces and also to provide kitchen facilities in the former museum office. If there was an intention to install night storage heaters then a different type of mains meter would be needed.

iii) Senior Citizens' Centre – following the initial investigations by the Handyman, the Town Clerk had met three flooring contractors on site to quote for new flooring throughout the centre. In addition she had approached three builders to quote for removing the existing floor covering so that the sub floor and joists could be inspected and a new subfloor laid once it had been established whether any works to the joists were needed.

iv) Arts Cafe – nothing was raised.

v) Former T.I.C. – nothing to report.

vi) Garden Maintenance – shrubs which have grown too close to seats will be cut back on safety grounds. Replanting of the former Dyers' Garden will be undertaken. A letter will be sent to the Heritage Centre Committee Members asking whether they would like the display board which was designed for the Dyers' Garden. If so, the Handyman would be asked to refurbish it before it is handed over.

A request from a member of the public to play an accordion and tin whistle in the garden was considered. The individual will be advised to approach the Arts Cafe owners with a view to being added to the list of those who play on Saturdays.

8. PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS – CEMETERY

i) Tree Works – the contractors have been asked to undertake the category 1 and 2 works as soon as possible after the end of August.

ii) Buttresses – no further quotes had been received.

iii) Digital Mapping Programmes – these would enable the mapping of parish information as a series of overlays on an Ordnance Survey map base. There is also scope for mapping of features such as burial spaces and allotment plots. All those facilities would facilitate the administrative work of the Town Council and the service it can provide to the public as well as making the job of the outside staff easier. Attempts to share the service used by the District Council had proved abortive. It was agreed that a representative from the providers identified by the National Association of Local Government be invited to give a demonstration to Councillors and staff.

9. PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS – AMENITIES:

- i. Trees – Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, proposed that the contractor be asked to undertake all the works which were highlighted as impinging on residential properties adjoining the allotments be done in the current financial year. Agreed.
- ii. Trees on Valley Path – the Town Clerk reported that a pattern appeared to be emerging of trees falling across Valley Path. Council staff are sent to clear them as best possible. The Town Clerk will draw the attention of Devon County Council to the problem in view of the lack of knowledge as to who owns the land.
- iii. Water Bowser – this matter had been discussed earlier.
- iv. Trees at North Street and Woodbury Lane Allotments – the Cupressus Leylandii at Woodbury Lane and the Sycamores at North Street had been felled.

10. UPDATE ON BANKING ARRANGEMENTS: three additional signatories were now signed up for online banking.

11. MATTERS OF URGENCY: the Town Clerk said that various recommendations for additional safety equipment had been highlighted during the strimmer training undertaken by the ground staff. Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, proposed that all such necessary equipment be bought. Agreed.

12. FUTURE PLAN CONSIDERATION: nothing was raised at this point.

The Town 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. Agreed.

13. QUOTES FOR PROPOSED WORKS:

- i. C.C.T.V. at Guildhall – a third contractor had made a site visit.
- ii. New Printer, Scanner and Computers – following a report from the Responsible Financial Officer, Cllr. Hull proposed that in view of the fact that, despite attempts by the clerical staff, it had not proved possible to find another firm which can provide a complete package for supply of computers, photocopier and technical support service for improved cyber security, Axminster Town Council should accept the quote from original provider, as discussed at the Town Council meeting in June, for the revised and reduced sum of £7357.50 and that a mixture of lease and purchase of hardware be used as advised by the Responsible Financial Officer. Cllr. Sedgewick seconded the vote. Agreed by 8 votes to one with Cllr. Young voting against the proposal.
- iii. Arrangements for new lengthsman – training courses were being put in place as available. All grounds staff had attended a strimmer training course. There was some discussion regarding what kind of vehicle might be suitable for this member of position. Information had been obtained

regarding electrical vehicles but these were smaller than considered useful. The consensus of opinion was that a conventional vehicle would be more suitable at this stage or possibly a hybrid.

iv. Email Provision – as an extension of item 13 ii, Cllr. Hull, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, proposed that this remain with the present provider. Agreed.

v. Flooring in Senior Citizens' Centre – the Town Clerk reported that she was in the process of obtaining quotes for replacing the floor covering as this would have to be removed to enable investigation of those parts of the floor which appeared to be substandard. The Town Council ground staff should be able to remove the existing flooring and sub-flooring so that the state of the joists underneath can be revealed. If these are sound the Town Council's own staff should be able to lay new sub-flooring in readiness for the flooring contractors to do their work.

15. TENANCY MATTERS: the Town Clerk is still working on the draft tenancy agreements.

16 STAFFING MATTERS - PENSION MATTERS: Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that a member of staff be permitted to use overtime pay to pay off outstanding pension contributions early and that the balance be taken as additional pay . Agreed.

17.STAFFING MATTERS - :PENSION MATTERS Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Mynard proposed that the position of lengthsman be added to the list of eligible post holders for joining the local government pension scheme. Agreed.

18. STAFFING MATTERS – PAY EQUALISATION: Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Leat, proposed that as soon as possible two members of staff undertaking the same kind of job be paid at the same rate. Agreed.

19. STAFFING MATTERS – APPLICATION OF NATIONALLY AGREED PAY SCALES FOR ALL GROUND STAFF: Cllr. Young seconded by Cllr. Leat, proposed that all staff except the Clerk and Deputy Clerk be transferred to the next nearest National Joint Council spinal column point with immediate effect. Agreed.

Signed Date