

AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT 7.00 p.m. ON MONDAY, 27th AUGUST 2019 AT THE GUILDHALL

1. PRESENT: Cllr. A.L.Young (Town Mayor), Cllr. A.E. Bournier, Cllr. D.R.H. Hull, Cllr. Mrs. S.L.N.Leat, Cllr M. Mynard, Cllr. M.D.G. Spurway, Cllr. P.G.W. Wales, 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 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. J.J. Farrow and Cllr. J.W. Walden.

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

4. APPLICATIONS FOR CO-OPTION: None had been received.

5. PUBLIC FORUM:- A member of the public posed various questions regarding the Old Courthouse and its garden. She was told that the Mayor, as Chairman of the Buildings and Finance Committee was responsible for matters relating to this site. In answer to her inquiry as to the purpose of the public garden she was told that it was a free garden for anyone to use, that it was an area to go and sit in peace and quiet. The member of the public challenged the Council regarding what she perceived to be its failure to publicize the garden better to all residents and that there was no spirit of welcome. Cllr. Young pointed out that a prominent, dementia-friendly, sign had been placed on the Minster Green. The member of the public questioned the proposal to display a notice requesting that birds are not fed, following an incident in which visitors to the garden had been harassed by a sea gull. Cllr. Young said that it would be necessary to move the bird feeders during the summer time as a re-enforcement to the notice but that the Town Council had agreed that they could be in place during the winter months when food is in shorter supply. The member of the public said that she had ordered the supply of notices regarding sea gulls which had been received by the Town Council as the current ones were out of date and had tied back some plants which had flopped over the path. The Mayor thanked her for doing so.

6. FINANCIAL MATTERS:

a) Electricity Supply Options – the Responsible Financial Officer had circulated quotes for electrical supplies from a broker which considers 46 potential suppliers. She had asked for standard options, mixed options and green options. She cautioned that she had been advised that the so-called green options did not supply power which had been generated solely using renewable energy. Cllr. Bournier said that there was a company which supplied power which was wholly generated from renewable sources. Cllr. Young proposed that the Responsible Financial Officer should look into this option and report back to the next Buildings and Finance Committee meeting. Agreed.

b) Vehicles for Lengthsman – following discussion of the information received so far, Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Leat, proposed that further information be obtained regarding the e power trucks range of vehicles. Agreed.

c) Working Party To Review Application of Community Benefit, Town Improvement and Town Building Funds – all members of the Committee were keen to be members of this working party. The Town Mayor suggested that it may be a project to find some land and put some affordable housing, such as containers, there. Cllr.

Hull suggested that letters be sent to authorities which have already done this to find out what problems had been encountered. Cllr. Spurway said that Bristol City Council had done this. The working party will meet before this is done.

d) Insurance – following discussion, Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Leat, proposed that the insurance be renewed for the sum of £2702.16. Agreed.

Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Bourner, proposed that the Town Clerk should enquire what the price of a long-term agreement would be, with a view to any adjustments being made at the time it became necessary to add any new items of equipment, due to be purchased shortly, to our assets. Agreed.

7. PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS – GUILDHALL:

i) Update on Works Required: - the Town Clerk reported that some progress had been made in securing quotes for the sliding doors and she had asked the Consultant Surveyor to chase up the company with whom he had dealt with initially to get a firmer quote. She was awaiting a quote from the contractor who had made a site visit to inspect the stage walls and ceiling. The contractor had indicated that to do the work the existing structures attached to the ceiling, such as lighting bars and curtains would have to be removed. Cllr. Mrs. Leat, who has some knowledge about these matters, will discuss the matter with the Town Clerk and the Town Mayor so that a properly co-ordinated plan can be put in place. Insufficient quotes had been received from C.C.T.V. firms.

8 . PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS – OLD COURTHOUSE

i) General Update on Repairs – nothing to report.

ii) Museum – a report on division options from the surveyor is awaited.

iii) Senior Citizens' Centre – the present plan is for the Town Council's own staff to remove the floor covering and the subfloor in the main room to expose the joists. A builder has agreed to come up and examine the exposed joists to ensure that they were in a sound condition. If so the Council's staff would then put back new subflooring prior to an outside contractor fitting new floor covering. If the joists are not in sound condition then the time and cost of any remedial work would have to be considered at that point and Town Councillors will be kept informed.

In respect of the floor covering, the two quotes for replacing the floor covering throughout the building were considered. The Town Clerk said that they were broadly comparable if one took out from one of them the allowance which had been made for that firm to remove and replace the subflooring.

Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Leat, proposed that the most appropriate flooring contractor be used, subject to it being clear that there may be additional costs if it is discovered that remedial work of any kind to the joists is needed. Agreed.

The Town Clerk had been liaising with the tenant and it would be possible to relocate most of the bookings to the Guildhall, which would be done at the Town Council's expense. Cllr. Wales, seconded by Cllr. Bourner, proposed that the works be undertaken around the bookings.

iv) Arts Cafe – nothing was raised.

v) Constable's Room Conclusion of Tenancy – this matter was still on-going.

vi) Former T.I.C. – nothing to report.

vi) Garden Maintenance – consideration is being given to replacing the Dyers Garden Plants with roses as these do well in shady areas. Any which cannot be accommodated at the Old Courthouse Garden will be used at the Crescent bed at the Cemetery.

8. PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS – CEMETERY

- i) Tree Works – The Town Clerk was still awaiting confirmation of a start date for these works..
- ii) Digital Mapping Programmes – Parishes On-line and Pear Techonology are the two recommended providers, according to the National Association for Local Councils. A member of staff from Pear Technology, which is the more flexible of the two, had agreed to come and give a demonstration of what this could offer. There was confusion regarding the dates put forward so this will be checked and the correct date circulated.

9. PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS – AMENITIES:

- i. To consider possible changes to allotment regulations – Cllr. Young said that she had been made aware that a Town Council elsewhere had a policy of allowing new allotment tenants a free 30 day introductory period and only confirming the tenancy and charging a rent if the tenant had shown evidence during that 30 day period of having done some significant work on the plot. She proposed that a similar clause be inserted in this Town Council's Rules as to Allotments. Cllr. Bourner seconded the proposal. Carried.

Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Mynard, proposed that the penalty for failure to maintain an allotment resulting in the need for the Town Council to send out a letter be increased from £75 to £125 and that any recurrence of this infringement should result in termination of the tenancy.

In both of the above instances any penalty action would be at the discretion of the Town Council as vested in the officers in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee.

- ii. Trees on Valley Path – the Town Clerk reported that she had tried to make contact with Network Rail but had not yet had a response. She said that Devon County Council would carry out an inspection and take action as it was a matter of safety and she was awaiting feedback from their Public Rights of Way section.
- iii. Section 106 Projects – East Devon District Council and Axminster Town Council had reached an agreement that all five of the eligible projects submitted for consideration should proceed and the District Council would be issuing a press release. She added that Cllr. Adamson –Drage was looking into whether the climbing wall could be located within the Raymonds Hill area rather than at Cloakham but this was only at an early stage of discussion.
- iv. Brown Signage to Promote Axminster – a representative from Axminster Heritage had approached the Town Clerk urging that brown tourist signage be put on the approach roads and on the by-pass to highlight the attractions in the town.

CLLR. HULL DECLARED AN INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF AXMINSTER HERITAGE.

CLLR. YOUNG DECLARED A PECUNIARY INTEREST AS BEING THE SPOUSE OF AN EMPLOYEE OF AXMINSTER CARPETS WHICH WAS INVOLVED IN PROVIDING THE PRESENT SIGNAGE BUT DID NOT LEAVE THE CHAMBER AS THE TOPIC UNDER DISCUSSION DID NOT HAVE ANY PECUNIARY IMPACT.

The views of the following organisations would be sought as to what the content of the signs should be: Axminster Heritage, Axminster Carpets, the Minster Church, Axminster Power Tools. The Town Clerk will find out the regulations regarding brown tourist signage. This matter will be progressed initially via a working party drawn from members of the Amenities Committee.

- v. Trees at North Street and Woodbury Lane Allotments – nothing to report.

- 10. MATTERS OF URGENCY: the third quote for exterior painting at Old Courthouse had been received as had clarification of the situation in respect of the Cemetery mowers. Cllr. Young proposed that both items be taken in committee. Agreed.

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

Cllr. Mrs. Leat 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. Hull seconded the proposal. Agreed.

12. QUOTES FOR PROPOSED WORKS:

- i. C.C.T.V. at Guildhall – there were still insufficient quotes.
- ii. Buttresses – one quote had been received some time ago but a request for further quotes had been made, which had proved quite difficult. A second quote had been received and circulated. Following discussion, Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Leat, proposed that the first quote be accepted.
- iii. Quotes for Exterior Painting at the Old Courthouse – three quotes had been received and circulated.
- iv. Following discussion, Cllr. Bourner, seconded by Cllr. Wales proposed that the quote to undertake the work for the sum of £xxxx be accepted. Agreed.

13. TENANCY MATTERS: the draft content of the leases and licence had been sent to the solicitors for comment.

14 STAFFING MATTERS - STAFF ABSENCE: the Deputy Town Clerk said that it was likely that the Lengthsman's injury would probably mean he would be off work for 8 or 9 weeks and how this would affect his pay.

15. CEMETERY MOWERS: the Town Clerk said that the mower which was the present "fall back" mower was not capable of mowing and was disintegrating in other ways. She, the Town Mayor and the Deputy Clerk had had lengthy discussions with Mr. Jeffery, the volunteer who cares for the mowers as to what would be the best way forward.

Cllr Bourner, seconded by Cllr. Spurrway, proposed that a new, top-end domestic mower of the same make that is used at present be purchased as a replacement fall back mower. Agreed.

Signed Date