

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

Held at the Guildhall, on Monday 10th February 2020 at 7.00 p.m.

Present:

Town Mayor: Cllr. A.L. Young
Councillors: M.N. Adamson-Drage, A.E. Bourner, C.A. Doherty, Ms. J.J. Farrow,
D.R.H. Hull, Mrs. S.L.N. Leat, M. Mynard,
Mrs. A. G. Sedgewick, M.D.G. Spurway, J.W. Walden and P. Wales,

The Town Clerk (Miss H. Kirkcaldie).

In attendance: Dist. Cllr. S. Jackson and Dist. Cllr. A.T. Moulding.
6 Members of the public. 1 representative of the Press.

2020/0031 APOLOGIES: Cllrs. D.J. Moore (Deputy Mayor), M. Featherstone, and Cty./Dist.
Cllr. I.L. Hall.

2020/0032 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: **CLLRS. BOURNER, DOHERTY, FARROW, HULL, MRS. LEAT, 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. SPURWAY DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF THE MANAGEMENT TEAM AT CLOAKHAM LAWN SPORTS CENTRE.

CLLR. FARROW DECLARED AN INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF AXMINSTER TWINNING ASSOCIATION AND A GOVERNOR OF AXMINSTER COMMUNITY PRIMARY ACADEMY

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.

2020/0033 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 13th JANUARY 2020: Cllr. Farrow asked that in the interests of clarity the word “bookings” be removed from the title for minute 2020/0028 There were no other corrections. Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that the corrected minutes be approved as an accurate record.

Agreed. Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that these be adopted as Council policy. Agreed.

2020/0034 TOWN FORUM – DANGEROUS ENTRANCE: A representative from Axminster Town Football Club raised concerns regarding the poor visibility for vehicles emerging from the football ground onto the Chard Road and requested permission to place a concave mirror on the verge opposite the entrance. He was informed that the Town Council was unable to assist and that Devon County Council did not encourage such mirrors, though many were to be seen around the area. Dist. Cllr. Moulding pointed out that the Highway Authority had been satisfied about the visibility splay at the time planning permission had been granted.

2020/0035 TOWN FORUM – CLOSURE THREAT FOR AXMINSTER CARPETS: Dist. Cllr. Moulding questioned the fact that it had been the Town Clerk rather than an elected Councillor who had spoken to the media regarding this matter. The Town Mayor said that as she had a pecuniary interest to declare and the media wanted an instant response the Town Clerk was the only person available at that time.

2020/0036 TOWN FORUM – LAND EAST OF AXMINSTER: A local resident said that the town disagreed with the proposal to have an additional 750 houses. She stated that the vast majority of recent houses had been bought for investment or to be occupied by in-comers. She said that any houses which are built should be on brownfield sites.

The Town Mayor said that any information regarding this land would be on the website.

2020/0037 TOWN FORUM – HOAX TELEPHONE CALLS: Cllr. Hull alerted those present to the prevalence of hoax telephone calls from H.M. Revenue and Customs.

2020/0038 TOWN FORUM – PUBLIC BENCHES: Cllr. Hull asked that the Town Clerk forward to other Councillors correspondence he had had with the District Council regarding placing seats on land in its ownership.

2020/0039 TOWN FORUM – NEW COUNCILLOR: A member of the public welcomed the presence of the newest Town Councillor.

2020/0040 TOWN FORUM – FUNDING FOR AXMINSTER GUILDHALL: A member of the public sought an explanation as to how Councillors arrived at the figure budgeted for funding support for the Guildhall and asked about the deficit which had been reported in 2015 when the last set of Guildhall accounts had been approved.

CLLR. YOUNG DECLARED A PECUNIARY INTEREST AS BEING THE GUILDHALL MANAGER AND LEFT THE CHAMBER.

IN THE ABSENCE OF CLLR. MOORE, CLLR. LEAT ASSUMED THE CHAIR.

The Town Clerk explained that the support grant had varied over the years and that there had been a time, after the Guildhall started running a bar, that the income from that, in combination with the income from hiring, had been sufficient to cover all the Guildhall running costs. Legislation had resulted in changed social habits so people were now drinking less and this had affected income. She added that it had not been possible to identify how, or by whom, the funds mentioned in the 2015 accounts had been misappropriated.

Cllr. Leat said that the chief reason for the increase in the financial support for the Guildhall

was that costs had risen but income had not kept pace with this rise. She added that the lease between the Management Committee and the Town Council required the Town Council to make good any deficit in the running costs from public funds and it was for that reason that eight of the Management Trustees were Councillors.

Cllr. Walden said that he had often stated that the Town Council should receive a budget from the Guildhall Management Committee and felt that Standing Orders should be amended to require a resolution every time money is paid to the Guildhall to cover its running costs.

Cllr. Farrow said that the accounts had now been received and would be tabled at the Annual Parish Meeting.

2020/0041 WELCOME TO COUNCILLOR C.W.C. HALL: the Town Mayor welcomed Cllr. Hall formally and invited him to introduce himself. Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Bourner, proposed that Cllr. Hall be a member of the Planning, Cemetery and Buildings and Finance committees. Agreed.

2020/0042 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13th JANUARY 2020: none.

2020/0043 MATTERS OF URGENCY: None.

2020/0044 MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13th JANUARY 2020: the accuracy of the minutes having been confirmed, Cllr. Mrs. Leat, Chairman of the Committee, proposed, seconded by Cllr. Doherty, that these be approved. Agreed. Cllr. Mrs. Leat, seconded by Cllr. Bourner, proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2020/0045 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 13th JANUARY 2020: None.

2020/0046 MEETING OF TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 27TH JANUARY 2020: the accuracy of the minutes having been confirmed, Cllr. Young, Chairman of the Committee, proposed, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, that these be approved. Agreed. Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, then proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2020/0047 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 27th JANUARY 2020: None

2020/0048 MINUTES OF THE BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27TH JANUARY 2020: the accuracy of the minutes having been confirmed, Cllr. Young, Chairman of the Committee, proposed, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, that these be approved. Agreed. Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Bourner, then proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2020/0049 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 27th JANUARY 2020: None.

2020/0050 MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27th

JANUARY 2020: the accuracy of the minutes having been confirmed, Cllr. Mrs. Leat, Chairman of the Committee, proposed, seconded by Cllr. Wales, that these be approved. Agreed. Cllr. Mrs. Leat, seconded by Cllr. Bournier, proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2020/0051 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 27th JANUARY 2020: None.

2020/0052 MINUTES OF THE RISK AND EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3RD FEBRUARY 2020: the accuracy of the minutes having been confirmed, Cllr. Young, Chairman of the Committee, proposed, seconded by Cllr. Adamson-Drage, that these be approved. Agreed. Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden, then proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2020/0053 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RISK AND EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 3rd FEBRUARY 2020: None.

2020/0054 FINANCIAL MATTERS – APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS FOR JANUARY 2020:

CLLR. YOUNG HAD A PECUNIARY INTEREST TO DECLARE IN RESPECT OF PAYMENT DATED 15TH JANUARY FOR RE-IMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES AND LEFT THE CHAMBER FOR THE DURATION OF THIS ITEM.

Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Leat, proposed that these payments be approved. Agreed.

CLLR. YOUNG RETURNED TO THE CHAMBER.

2020/0055 FINANCIAL MATTERS – REPORTING OF ANY ITEMS APPROVED FOR EXPENDITURE BY TOWN MAYOR OR COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN:

- a) Weld mesh to improve security on Guildhall fire escapes, subject to building regulations permitting.
- b) Report on beam over doors opening (£150) from Structural Engineer in connection with project to install sliding doors.

2020/0056 FINANCIAL MATTERS - RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT:

In a written report, the Responsible Financial Officer said that she and the Town Clerk had attended a training event in Plymouth and a Pensions annual update in Exeter. She said that the Pensions Discretions Policy was due for review. She had been working on preparations for the Annual Return.

2020/0057 FINANCIAL MATTERS – UPDATE ON VEHICLE ACQUISITION: The Town Clerk stated that the finance documents had been completed and that the vehicle would be delivered within the next fortnight.

2020/0058 FINANCIAL MATTERS – ARRANGEMENTS FOR CLOSURE OF BANK ACCOUNT: The following resolution, proposed by Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr.

Farrow, was proposed and agreed: The Authorised Signatories in the current mandate, for the accounts detailed in Section 1.3, be changed in accordance with section Authorised Signatories. And the current mandate will continue as amended.

2020/0059 ACTIONS RELATING TO RISK MANAGEMENT: Cllr. Young said that risk and its management were hot topics currently. Cllr. Young said that it would be a vast job to put in place all the documentation required. She felt that there was no one on the Council who had the deep knowledge needed and suggested that an outside expert be brought in to do an audit. Everything from financial strategy to individual items of equipment needed to be considered. The Committee is working on a Risk Management Structure which would be circulated to all Councillors once completed.

2020/0060 SAFER TOWNS INITIATIVE: Cllrs. Young and Sedgwick had attended a meeting to discuss how the £5000 grant from Central Government for the Safer Towns Initiative should best be spent in Axminster. Actions such as an increase in static close circuit television cameras, targeted drug advice for schools and how to deal with problem of hate crime were all areas which were deemed worthy of consideration. Cllr. Walden asked that the actions proposed be referred back to the Town Council should the Town Council be minded to match fund the original grant from Central Government.

Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Bourner, proposed that a £5000 grant be made to match fund the original grant. Agreed.

2020/0061 GRIEVANCE POLICY: Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Sedgewick, proposed that the Grievance Policy, as amended, be adopted. Agreed.

2020/0062 DISCIPLINARY POLICY: Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that the Disciplinary Policy, as amended, be adopted. Agreed.

2020/0063 TOWN ENTRY SIGNAGE: Following discussion, Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Bourner, proposed that four new basic signs be purchased with the Town Crest and the wording “Welcome to Axminster, Home of Fine Carpets since 1775. Twinned with Dourvres La Delivrande.” Each sign to be placed at a height sufficient to allow a wooden planter to be placed beneath it.

Cllr. Hall’s suggestion that local school children be involved with creating signage was welcomed by Cllr. Sedgewick but felt to be more appropriate for signage to the many attractions within the town. Cllr. Hall will make a presentation at the next meeting.

2020/0064 REVISED ARRANGEMENTS FOR MEETINGS: The Town Mayor outlined various suggestions, based on pro forma documents, which she felt would increase the Council’s efficiency and ensure that actions did not get “lost”. These included a proposal form on which Councillors should submit items they wished to place on the agenda of a meeting, a “to do” list summarising the actions to take forward from each meeting, which would be kept as a rolling document. The Town Clerk and the Mayor would still have the right to refuse to place an item on the agenda if they had good reason for so doing.

Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Doherty, proposed that these arrangements be trialled for

three months.

2020/0065 POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE STORAGE OF TOWN COUNCIL EQUIPMENT: Cllr. Walden said that this matter had arisen from recent discussions at the Buildings and Finance Committee regarding the Cemetery Paths. He said that use of the Cemetery Chapel was compromised by the need to move equipment out if there was to be clear access to the work benches. He said he would undertake a scoping exercise along with one of the Town Council's volunteers regarding the possibility of erecting an agricultural storage building on plot no 1 at North Street Allotments. As a result of this idea, Cllr. Spurway, Chairman of the Cemetery Committee, agreed to defer investigation of solutions to reduce the mudiness of the access routes to the Chapel.

2020/0066 STAFF TRAINING DAY IN PLYMOUTH: The Town Clerk said that she and the Responsible Financial Officer had found this a very worthwhile day in terms of the topics covered, which ranged from employment and finance to social media, website compliance and the challenges of climate change and the environment.

2020/0067 FUTURE PLANS – ENVIRONMENT WORKING PARTY: the Town Mayor will contact the following Councillors with a list of dates- Cllrs. Farrow, Hull, Bourner, Hall and Sedgewick.

2020/0068 FUTURE PLANS – NEW2AXMINSTER: The Town Mayor urged Councillors to attend this event which will be held on 29th February to welcome recent newcomers to the town.

2020/0069 CORRESPONDENCE :

- a. Letters Received.
 - i. E.D.D.C. – Draft Affordable Housing Strategy consultation.
 - ii. R. Green – re Plastic Free Town status.
- b. Meetings
- c. Reports Received.

THE TOWN MAYOR HAD RESPONDED TO THE EFFECT THAT THE TOWN COUNCIL WAS UNABLE TO COMPLY WITH THE REQUEST SET OUT IN THE LETTER

- iii. D.A.L.C. – re Royal Garden Party nominations.
- iv. A35 Diversion Group.

2020/0070 ACTIONS UPDATE: Nothing to report.

2020/0071 NEXT STEPS: The Administrative Assistant summarised the main actions to take forward from the meeting as being:

Town Clerk – town signage and letter to Ms. Green.

Deputy Town Clerk – proposal forms

Agricultural Building scoping – Cllr. Walden.

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. Walden seconded the proposal. Agreed.

2020/0072 STAFFING MATTERS – STAFF TRAINING: the Deputy Clerk will be arranging various training both general and specific for staff and Councillors.

2020/0073 QUOTATIONS RECEIVED: The Town Clerk said that she was awaiting further information regarding some of these and had not had time to deal with the others. Cllr. Young said that she would be contacting a company regarding a suitable product to apply to the chimney at the Old Courthouse, even on a temporary basis, to try to keep the damp out pending getting quotes to rebuild it.

2020/0074 TENANCY MATTERS: there was discussion of a further letter from a prospective tenant. Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that the tenant be offered a 12 month tenancy. Agreed.

Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that the level of service charge suggested in the letter be agreed subject to a clause indicating that if the electricity usage resulted in that sum being inadequate then any amount over that level would be charged in addition. The offer to pay six month's rent in advance was accepted. Agreed.

Signed Date.....