

## AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT 7.00 p.m. ON MONDAY, 24<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2020 AT THE GUILDHALL

1. PRESENT: Cllr. A.L.Young (Town Mayor), Cllr. A.E. Bourner, Cllr. D.R.H. Hull, Cllr. Mrs. S.L.N.Leat, Cllr M. Mynard, Cllr. M.D.G. Spurway, Cllr. P.G. Wales, Cllr. J.W. Walden, the Town Clerk and the Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer. 0 members 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. BOURNER, HULL, 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. WALDEN DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNORS OF AXMINSTER SECONDARY SCHOOL.

2. APOLOGIES: Cllr. Adamson-Drage, Cllr. J.J. Farrow and Cllr. C.W.C. Hall. Cllr. D.J. Moore (Deputy Mayor) was not present.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 27<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2020: having been approved and adopted by the Town Council, these were signed by the Chairman.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF ABOVE MEETING: this took the form of consideration of the next steps sheet from the previous meeting. Some items would be considered later in the meeting.

No progress had been made with the remainder and they will be re-listed.

5. PUBLIC FORUM: None.

6. FINANCIAL MATTERS:

a) Consideration of Grants Received: the Responsible Financial Officer reminded members that the policy position was that the Buildings and Finance Committee should make recommendations to go forward for final consideration by the full Town Council.

i. Axminster Gymnastics Club – after prolonged discussion Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that the Responsible Financial Officer further information from the applicant in respect of any charitable activities and the constitution. Agreed.

ii. Axminster Job Club – CLLR. WALDEN REMINDED MEMBERS THAT HE WAS THE TOWN COUNCIL'S NOMINATED REPRESENTATIVE ON THE JOB CLUB COMMITTEE.

CLLR. YOUNG DECLARED A PECUNIARY INTEREST AS BEING THE SPOUSE OF ONE OF THE REDUNDANT EMPLOYEES OF AXMINSTER CARPETS AND LEFT THE CHAMBER.

Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Hull, proposed that Cllr. Leat assume the Chair. Agreed.

Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Mynard, proposed that, in light of the recent redundancies at Axminster Carpets, a grant of £1000 be made for the next financial year. Agreed.

It was agreed that a speaker from the Job Club be invited to the Annual Parish Meeting.

CLLR. YOUNG RESUMED THE CHAIR.

iii. Health And Local Food For Families – the feeling in the course of discussion was that the proposals were very exclusive, being based in a specific school. No proposal in support of this grant application was put forward.

A request from Totally Locally had been received too late for consideration at this meeting and will be placed on the Town Council agenda for March.

b) Definition of Town Building and Town Improvement Funds – following discussion, Cllr. Young proposed that the Responsible Financial Officer examine all the ear-marked funds and advise how she felt it was best to proceed in order to avoid limitation of the amount of general reserved available to Council and to simplify the presentation of financial information for audit purposes. Agreed.

## 7. PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS:

### **a Guildhall:**

- i) Update on Works Required – following discussion which centred around the need for the installation of a new beam to further the project for electronic doors, it was agreed that the consultant surveyor be asked to attend the next meeting of the Committee. The Town Mayor asked that the consultant dealing with the office reconfiguration be asked to make another visit.
- ii) Electrical Survey – Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Leat, proposed that the quote from the contractor to undertake a full survey of the building for £1750, excluding value added tax, be accepted. Agreed.
- iii) Bar – this matter was deferred pending receipt of further quotes.

### **b Old Courthouse**

- i) General Update on Repairs: - the Town Clerk was not sure whether the decorators had finished their work. She feared that the work had been done during such wet weather that it may not be very effective. The water ingress at rear of the Senior Citizens was now thought to be the result of faulty flashing round the roof light and further works would be needed. Other water-ingress problems have appeared and how these can be resolved is not clear.
- ii) Lift Access – the Clerk sought clarification regarding Councillors intentions as regards lift access at the Old Courthouse. The Town Mayor said that she felt that the cost of installing a lift would be prohibitive. Cllr. Walden said that the matter had been discussed two years previously and that the advice in the Disability Discrimination Act was quite clear. He felt that the matter should be pursued no further. Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Young, proposed that the matter of installing a lift at the Old Courthouse should be taken no further. Agreed.
- iii) Museum – although a rough estimate for installing submeters had been obtained, the Town Clerk suggested that it would be unwise to take the matter any further until a decision had been reached regarding how that part of the building should be used. A suggestion had been put forward that the space might be suitable as a dance studio or for exercise classes and that it be operated for that purpose. Cllr. Walden suggested that local groups including drama groups be approached to see how they could make use of it.

A working party comprising Cllrs. Walden, Leat, Spurway, Sedgewick and Young will look into this subject and prepare a report for the Committee.

- iv) Senior Citizens' Centre – further investigation of the water ingress is needed.
- v) Arts Café – the Town Clerk had researched the product mentioned by Cllr. Walden at the last meeting. The Deputy Town Clerk said that the problem of water ingress here had got significantly

worse quite quickly. Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that this product be used at least on a temporary basis. Agreed.

- vi) Former Tourist Information Office – the ponding of water on the roof remains a problem but there is no water ingress.
- vii) Garden – the Town Clerk suggested that this matter be passed over.

#### **c Cemetery**

- i) Path – a briefing note had been circulated. Cllr. Walden said that there was a water permeable asphalt. The Town Clerk will obtain further information. Cllr. Walden felt that the problem in the Z Section should be addressed first. Cllr. Spurway sought permission to fell a tree whose roots were deforming the path beside the beech hedge in the Y section. Quotes will be obtained.
- ii) Digital Mapping – following discussion, Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Wales, proposed that the quote for £4435 be accepted. Carried. Regarding Transfer of data, he asked whether that could be done manually by Council staff and how that would compare with any charge made by the contractor.

#### **d Amenities:**

- i. Trees on Valley Path – the Town Clerk said that she had continued to press for a meeting with Network Rail but with no success to date.
- ii. Hedge Cutting at Allotments – the contractor had been contacted.
- iii. Problems At Lower Entrance to Woodbury Park Allotments – Cllr. Walden said he was looking into an alternative to the removal of the section of hedge and would report back.
- iv. War Memorial Flower Bed– the Town Clerk said that she was awaiting a response regarding the necessity for a Faculty.

#### **8. MATTERS OF URGENCY:**

CLLR. YOUNG DECLARED A PECUNIARY INTEREST IN RELATION TO AN ITEM TO BE RAISED BY ANOTHER COUNCILLOR AND LEFT THE CHAMBER

CLLR. WALDEN PROPOSED THAT CLLR. LEAT TAKE OVER THE CHAIR. AGREED.

- a) Impact of Redundancies at Axminster Carpets: - Cllr. Bourner asked what assistance could be given to those affected. The Town Clerk outlined what had been done in similar circumstances previously. Cllr. Bourner, seconded by Cllr. Leat, proposed that £2000 be allocated towards assisting with the situation. Agreed.

CLLR. YOUNG RETURNED TO THE CHAMBER AT THIS POINT

- b) Request Relating to Water Bill at Pippins – the Manager was seeking a £750 contribution from the Town Council towards a large water bill that the supplier had suggested arose from the fact that the Town Council had had several estimated bills. The Responsible Financial Officer pointed out that a final meter reading had been taken at the time the Town Council vacated Pippins and that the incoming tenants should have taken their own reading to avoid any future debate. She pointed out also that the Town Council had incurred a very large bill at one point which it was established was most likely the result of taps having been left running. Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Wales, proposed that a recommendation be made to the full Town Council that the request be refused. Agreed.
- c) Request to Vary Clause in Agreement with Housing Association in Respect of Former Allotment Land at North Street: the Town Clerk said that she had sent a copy of the letter to the solicitors and been advised that it was a standard request reflecting changes in financial regulations. Cllr. Walden proposed that a recommendation be made to the full Town Council that consent be given to the request. Agreed.

9. FUTURE PLAN CONSIDERATION:

- i) Preparation of Five Year Plan – the Mayor asked for volunteers to be involved in this and asked that members let the Town Clerk know.
- ii) Risk Management – Cllr. Young asked for volunteers willing to form part of an ad hoc risk management working party to let the Deputy Clerk know. The Deputy Clerk will arrange a meeting for this working party.

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. Farrow seconded the proposal. Agreed.

10. QUOTES FOR PROPOSED WORKS:

a) Measured Building Survey For Town Council Properties – as the quotes received had, in one case, been consolidated, Councillors requested that this made it difficult to compare like with like. The Town Clerk will find out whether the section of the Guildhall already plotted by one provider would be compatible with the system used by the others. It was agreed that there was no need to get the chapels done as their structure is very basic.

b) Van Insurance – the Responsible Financial Officer reported that this had been obtained for the sum of £694 but she had not had time to circulate the information to Councillors.

11. TENANCY MATTERS: Nothing was raised.

12. STAFFING MATTERS: the Town Clerk updated members on staffing matters.

Signed ..... Date .....