

AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE VIRTUAL BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT 7.00 p.m. ON MONDAY, 29TH JUNE 2020

1. PRESENT: Cllr. A.L.Young (Town Mayor), Cllr. Adamson-Drage, Cllr. Doherty, Cllr. Mrs. S.L.N.Leat, Cllr. M. Featherstone, Cllr M. Mynard, Cllr. A.G. Sedgewick, Cllr. J.W. Walden, the Town Clerk, the Administrative Assistant and the Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (for parts of the meeting). 0 members of the public, 0 representative of the press.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

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, ALSO A PERSONAL INTEREST AS A MEMBER OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION.

CLLRS, DOHERTY AND LEAT DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING MEMBERS OF THE AXMINSTER GUILDHALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE IN RESPECT OF ANY ITEMS RELATING TO THE GUILDHALL.

CLLR SEDGEWICK DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST IN RESPECT OF THE FOLLOWING:
WIFE OF THE RECTOR OF ST MARYS (MINSTER) CHURCH.

CLLR. WALDEN DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNORS OF AXMINSTER SECONDARY SCHOOL.

3. APOLOGIES/NOT PRESENT: Cllr. J.J. Farrow (Deputy Mayor). Cllr. A.E. Bourner, Cllr. D.J. Moore and Cllr. Spurway.

4. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24th FEBRUARY 2020: having been approved and adopted by the Town Council, will be signed by the Chairman at a later date.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF ABOVE MEETING: None.

6. PUBLIC FORUM: None.

7. COVID 19 RELATED ADJUSTMENTS: Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that the following adjustments will be put in place at the Old Courthouse Garden in the interests of public safety in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic:-

a) Removal of metal tables and chairs so that only the wooden benches remain.

b) Suitably worded notices to be put in place on the gates and within the garden reminding the public to observe social distancing and advising that they use the garden at their own risk.

Details of the COVID 19 adjustments at the offices will be circulated to Councillors.

8 FINANCIAL MATTERS:

a) Annual Return - No questions were put to the Responsible Financial Officer regarding the supporting information relating to the Annual Return which had been circulated prior to its consideration by the full Town Council in July.

b) Larger Grants Policy – following discussion, Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Young, proposed that the draft Larger Grants Policy be adopted without any upper limit being specified. Agreed.

c) Motor Vehicle Fuel Supplier - following discussion, Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Adamson-Drage, proposed that no change be made to present arrangements.

d) Update on Insurance Matters – there was nothing to report at this stage.

9. PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS

a **Guildhall:**

- i) Update on Works Required – the Town Mayor sought views on resolving the office accommodation problems. She said that the best solution might be that the two existing offices become purely for the use of the Town Council staff with the Guildhall Manager moving elsewhere. The suggestion had been that the Clerk and Deputy Clerk share an office and the back office become a public office where the Administrative Assistant would work with a counter to work behind and a seating area. She said that the cost would involve purchase of two new desks, one for the Deputy Clerk and one for the Guildhall Manager plus the cost of repainting the new office for the latter. Cllrs. Walden and Sedgewick expressed their support. The Town Mayor suggested a budget of £3000 for these works. Cllr. Leat said that a new area would then have to be created for the chairs. The Town Clerk raised the matter of the Guildhall Manager being a lone worker but was advised that this could be managed by various methods. The Town Mayor said that the present office arrangements were unsuitable given the need for social distancing. The matter will be put on the Town Council agenda.
- ii) Bar – No progress
- iii) Re-carpeting of the Main Foyer – Cllr. Walden asked that investigation be undertaken into whether Axminster Carpets was still producing suitable carpeting. The Town Mayor will look into this.

b **Old Courthouse**

- i) General Update on Repairs: - little progress because of lock down. The external painting had been completed prior to lockdown. Contact had been made and quotes obtained in respect of investigating the causes of and solutions to the damp ingress at the Arts Café. No arrangements had been made for the cleaning of the common parts.
- ii) Museum – there is new tenant for the agricultural room. Arrangements for sub-metering still need to be investigated. The Town Mayor said that it had been agreed that a cost would be obtained for putting the agricultural room on to the same meter as the Constable's Room. The Town Clerk will contact the electrician in the first instance.
- iii) Senior Citizens' Centre – the Town Clerk said that she thought the problem may be at the roof light rather than with the slates. Cllr. Featherstone and Cllr. Young will make a site visit.
- iv) Arts Café – quotes relating to the water ingress will be considered in committee.
- v) Retail Outlet – no reports had been received regarding water ingress here.
- vi) Garden – it had been suggested that this be renamed in memory of the late Cllr. Hull. The Mayor said she wished to defer such a decision.

c **Cemetery**

- i) Digital Mapping – the digitised maps had been received but are quite complicated with much fine detail. It would really need a face to face meeting to check through it and this would have to take place at a later date. It is important in the long run to ensure that it is error free. There will be benefits in terms of public access and monitoring the condition of memorials photographically.

d **Amenities:**

- i. Allotments – quotes for removal of asbestos will be discussed in Committee. The digital maps for the allotment sites had been received and reviewed by the Administrative Assistant and was fixed apart from one small query.
- ii. War Memorial – Councillors felt that it would be appropriate for the memorial to be cleaned but this should be done in the least harmful way. The Town Clerk will contact a local contractor who is knowledgeable about this subject. The Town Mayor said that the proposed flower beds should be done in the name of the President of the Royal British Legion. This would take the form of two beds parallel to West Street.
- iii. Jubilee Field – the developers are now keen to press on with the works required so that they can hand it over. There will be some levelling of the land to create a small kick about football pitch and a vehicle access off Swain Close for maintenance purposes, as per the circulated plan. There was a divergence of opinion regarding the degree of tarmac access path needed. The Town Clerk had consulted the Handyman whose opinion was that the plan as presented was needed if there was a vehicle with a trailer involved. The Town Mayor said that there was a need for a tarmac path through the field. The matter will be finalised at the Town Council meeting.
- iv. Removal of Finger Post Stump in Coombefield Lane Car Park – Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Doherty, proposed that the outdoor staff should remove this for future use and refurbishment for another purpose. Agreed.

8. MATTERS OF URGENCY:

- a. Questionnaire on Safe Re-opening of High Streets - Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Doherty proposed that the response drafted by the Town Clerk be sent. Agreed.
- b. Request for Additional Item of Equipment for Lengthsman – this was referred into Committee for consideration under quotes.

Cllr. Walden 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. Doherty seconded the proposal. Agreed.

9. QUOTES FOR PROPOSED WORKS:

- a) Removal of Asbestos From Allotment Sites – Cllr. Young seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that the quote to undertake the work for £450, subject to the usual paperwork checks, be accepted. Agreed.
- b) Request for Additional Item of Equipment - a request had been received for a leaf blower with lower vibration levels. Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that this be done and the upper limit for this set at £500. Agreed. The Town Clerk suggested that this money be taken from reserves but the Town Mayor said that it should come from the tools budget for outdoor staff.

11. TENANCY MATTERS: none

12. STAFFING MATTERS: none.

Signed Date