

AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE VIRTUAL BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT 7.00 p.m. ON MONDAY, 27TH JULY 2020

1. PRESENT: Cllr. A.L.Young (Town Mayor), Cllr. Doherty, Cllr. Mrs. S.L.N.Leat, Cllr. A.G. Sedgewick, Cllr. J.W. Walden, the Town Clerk, the Administrative Assistant and the Deputy Town Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer. 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, Cllr M. Mynard, and Cllr. Spurway.

4. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 29TH JUNE 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: discussion covered the value or otherwise of putting in place equipment such as foggers, untra-violet wands and hand sanitising stations. It was agreed that more information should be sought about their efficacy in relation to the size of room and the kinds of surface which may need to be treated and cost. Cllr. Walden highlighted the importance, for track and trace purposes, of keeping a record of the contact details of those who visit the premises.

Councillors highlighted situations where locations where queueing was obstructing vision and approaches will be made to those traders to see if this could be reviewed.

As some funding would be available from the District Council Re-opening the High Street fund. A request will be submitted for hand sanitising stations at each side of the puffin crossing in Trinity Square and by the ticket machines in the car parks. Reminders about social distancing will be stencilled at key intersections and signage warning that there may be pedestrians in the road.

8. PROVISION OF INEXPENSIVE ANDROID TABLETS FOR ALL COUNCILLORS TO IMPROVE ACCESSIBILITY OF MEMBERS' AREA ON WEBSITE: following comments from several Councillors that they were experiencing problems in accessing the information placed in the Members' Area, the Deputy Clerk had identified that this appeared to be caused by factors such as the kind of device being used to access the

website, the skill level of the operator and the format in which the information is uploaded. While some members felt that this provision was not needed for all members, others saw merit in the improved security provision that this might enable. The balance of opinion was against such provision, by three votes to two but further information will be obtained before the next Town Council meeting. It was agreed that the Town Clerk should send out an email to all Councillors asking if they would like a Council-bought tablet to enable better participation. Cllr. Leat suggested that advice on model and cost be sought from the District Council.

9. FINANCIAL MATTERS:

a) Larger Grants Policy – this had been revised to broaden the remit to include Frequently Asked Questions and allow not for profit organisations to apply. Following discussion, Cllr. Young seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that the draft Larger Grants Policy be adopted as circulated with minor amendments as discussed. Agreed.

b) Update on Insurance Matters – the Town Clerk said that the insurance was due for renewal at the end of August. She said that although the Council is in a long term agreement, the premium may change to reflect any new assets and the impact of COVID 19.

9. PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS

a Guildhall:

- i) Update on Works Required – the Town Mayor reported that she had arranged a meeting with a representative from Axminster Carpets and would report back in due course. At the same time she will ask for a quote for a lower grade carpet for the offices but one which is still wool.
- ii) Bar – No progress.
- iii) Office relocation costs – to enable social distancing for the office staff the Guildhall Manager will move to an office on the opposite side of the outer foyer. There will be some associated costs for furniture, carpeting and cabling.

The Town Clerk asked whether there was an intention to progress the replacement of the doors between the outer and main foyers. The Town Mayor said there was a need to have a wider discussion about the financial situation.

b Old Courthouse

- i) General Update on Repairs: - the report from the surveyor on the damp penetration at the Arts Café had just been received.
- ii) Museum – arrangements had been made for a site visit from the electricians but no report had been received.
- iii) Senior Citizens' Centre – the Town asked whether Cllr. Young had any update from Cllr. Featherstone on the flashing round the roof light and was told that she had not
- iv) Arts Café – quotes relating to the water ingress will be considered in committee.
- v) Retail Outlet – no reports had been received regarding any water ingress here.
- vi) Garden – in response to a question from the Town Mayor, the Town Clerk said that it was not the normal custom to use weedkiller on the cobbles in the courtyard as regular footfall took care of that normally. Cllr. Walden said that he had a small flame thrower which he would be willing to lend to the Town Council on a trial basis. The Town Clerk suggested a scarifier but was concerned that this might damage the material in which the cobbles are set. The Town Clerk will look into the possibility of an electric flame gun. Cllr. Sedgewick said that electric wands seemed very inexpensive.

c Cemetery

- i) Digital Mapping -nothing to report.

d Amenities:

The Town Clerk reported that she had had to order a replacement pump for the water bowser.

- i. Allotments – the Administrative Assistant said that a letter had been drafted for circulation to all tenants requesting them to inform her if they suspected that there was any asbestos on their plots. The shed which had given concern originally will be left until there is a change of tenancy and that all instances would be dealt with at that time. The Town Clerk asked that further discussion be referred into Committee, which was agreed.

Cllr. Walden reported that the existing skip supplier was ceasing trading and asked that other suppliers be approached to ensure that they could access all the sites with their vehicles. The Administrative Assistant said that she hoped that as all plots were now taken there was no site for them and she hoped that the number of skips would be reduced.

- ii. War Memorial – a response had been received from the War Memorial Trust setting out their views regarding work to the memorial. The matter will be considered when Councillors have had time to look at the detail of the report. Cllr. Walden commended the work done on the Charmouth memorial.
- iii. Jubilee Field – Cllr. Walden said that the developer was keen to undertake work on the field as soon as possible but as this will involve closure of the field, the District Council had asked that this be deferred until after the Corona virus situation had become clearer.
- iv. Removal of Finger Post Stump in Coombefield Lane Car Park – this had been put on the list for the outdoor staff to do at some point.
- v. Seat at Former Methodist Chapel – the present owner was happy for the seat to be replaced. The Deputy Clerk suggested that there is a more attractive re-cycled plastic bench which could be used in the town centre and which had the town crest on. The Town Clerk will look into the costs.

8. MATTERS OF URGENCY:

- a. Information had been received regarding a fast-track process for dealing with pavement licences from food and drink outlets. Cllr. Young proposed that power to respond be delegated to the Town Clerk in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-chairman of the Planning Committee. Cllr. Walden seconded the proposal. Carried.

Cllr. 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. Doherty seconded the proposal. Agreed.

9. QUOTES FOR PROPOSED WORKS:

- a) Office Carpeting – the Town Clerk said that she had obtained a price from a local supplier for an inexpensive carpet at £7.49 per square metre with underlay and fitting costs on top of that. Cheaper alternatives were obtainable online. The Town Mayor had also made enquiries and had obtained a price of around £16.99 for a wool rich carpet which was better in terms of durability and environmental footprint. Further investigations will be made by the Town Mayor and she will order the appropriate carpet for both sets of offices but not the Town Clerk's office.

11. TENANCY MATTERS:

- a) Allotment Asbestos – the Town Clerk explained that there were health issues in relation to the tenancy in question and gave details. The Town Mayor stated that she felt the Town Council had a duty to manage the situation and it was not down to tenants as Cllr. Walden had suggested. Cllr. Young proposed that a letter be sent to tenants asking them to notify the Town Council within 28 days if they

suspected that there was any asbestos on their plots. This would then enable contact to be made with an appropriate contractor in due course for all the identified asbestos to be removed at once.

Agreed.

- b) Remedial Works at the Arts Café – Councillors had not had time to consider the content of the report received from the surveyor. The Town Clerk will send copies of the report to the tenant and to the Conservation Officer to seek her views prior to a Listed Building Application being submitted.
- c) Tables, Seats and Benches in the Garden – the tenants had expressed their disappointment at the removal of the metal chairs and tables from the public part of the garden and requested their return. If the chairs and tables are returned they can be used only in the licensed area of the garden and there is a limit on the number for that area. If the seats are to be accommodated then some of the benches will need to be removed, some of which were donated specifically for the garden. Cllr. Walden said that the tenants would like a meeting with the Councillors. The Town Clerk said that tenants would be willing to take responsibility for hygiene of any tables in the public area.

Cllr. Young said that there was no need for tables in the public area and their presence did not encourage social distancing.

Cllr. Leat said that the licence set out how many tables the tenant could have and in what area. The Town Clerk said that some of the benches which had been positioned by the Town Council had been displaced by the previous tenant, which did not operate with a licensed area. It may be that these would have to be removed to accommodate the seats removed from the public area.

12 **STAFFING MATTERS:** as the Employment Minutes had not been approved, the Town Clerk to pay the agreed over time to a member of the outdoor staff immediately. Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Young proposed that this be agreed.

Signed Date