

AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE VIRTUAL BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT 7.00 p.m. ON MONDAY, 28th SEPTEMBER 2020

1. PRESENT: Cllr. A.L.Young (Town Mayor), Cllr. J.J. Farrow, (Deputy Mayor), Cllr. Featherstone, Cllr. Mrs. S.L.N.Leat, 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. 2 members of the public, 0 representative of the press.
2. APOLOGIES/NOT PRESENT: Cllr. M.N. Adamson-Drage, Cllr. Doherty, Cllr. A.E. Bourner, Cllr. D.J. Moore and Cllr. M.D.G. Spurway
3. 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. FARROW, LEAT AND SEDGEWICK EACH DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING MEMBERS OF THE AXMINSTER GUILDHALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE IN RESPECT OF ANY ITEMS RELATING TO THE GUILDHALL.

CLLR. FARROW DECLARED AN INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF AXMINSTER TWINNING ASSOCIATION AND A GOVERNOR OF AXMINSTER COMMUNITY PRIMARY ACADEMY AND AS A JOINT TENANT OF A TOWN COUNCIL ALLOTMENT AT WOODBURY PARK ALLOTMENTS

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 A MEMBER OF THE LOCAL GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE OF AXMINSTER SECONDARY SCHOOL, AXMINSTER SKATE PARK C.I.C. AXMINSTER JOB CLUB AND AXMINSTER TWINNING ASSOCIATION.

4. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24th AUGUST 2020: had not yet 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: arrangements had been put in place in accordance with Government requirements for track and trace for both staff and visitors, principally at the Guildhall which is where there is the greatest likelihood of visitors entering the building.

8. FINANCIAL MATTERS

a) Grants Applications Received: -

- i. Axe Valley and West Dorset Ring and Ride – Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that a small grant of £1000 be made in 2021-2022.
- ii. Axe Valley Youth Club – no award was made as the Club was not meeting as a result of COVID 19 but the situation will be kept under review should the situation change.

iii. The Repair Café

CLLR. FARROW DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS HAVING A PARTNER WHO WAS CLOSELY CONNECTED WITH THIS GROUP. SHE TOOK NO PART IN THIS ITEM OF BUSINESS.

Cllr. Walden proposed that a small grant of £1000 be earmarked for this group subject to its being up and running by April 2021. Cllr. Sedgewick seconded the proposal. Agreed.

No further applications had been received.

b) Prioritization of Works According to Health and Safety Criteria: The Town Clerk said that she considered that remedial works to eliminate water penetration at the Arts Café were a high priority as would be any safety works identified in recent inspections of the Jubilee Fountain, the Cemetery Chapels and the Old Courthouse.

At the Guildhall, replacement of the carpeting in the offices had been completed and arrangements were being finalised for re-carpeting of the public areas, apart from the backstage areas. Councillors would need to make a decision regarding the presence of asbestos in the roof void and the mechanism for opening and closing the stage curtains. Cllr. Sedgewick reminded Councillors that the issue of damp in the Town Clerk's office needed to be rectified. Cllr. Walden asked what the situation was regarding the risk of water penetration over the stage. In addition replacement of defective lining panels had yet to be done, although the defective panels themselves had been removed. He added that replacement of the stage curtains as well as the opening/closing mechanism would be needed. Cllr. Leat said that she was still investigating a possible source of funding for that. The Town Clerk added that the blocked downpipe beside the dustbins needed to be dealt with. The Deputy Clerk felt that an initial audit from a Health and Safety expert was important. Cllr. Walden said that he had a possible contact whom he could ask to assist with that and would report back at the next meeting. It was agreed that this contact be approached. Cllr. Young added that refitting of the bar was also necessary.

c) Equipment Requirements for Coming Year – the following matters were put forward: space heater for Handyman's Work Shop, disposal of one tractor and hedge trimmer; chipper for arisings from cemetery and lengthsman's work. There was discussion of the disposal/use of the chippings generated. Cllr. Featherstone informed members that there was a local farmer who would be able to take these and render them free of harmful organisms and, if desired, return some for mulching on Council sites. Cllr. Featherstone will arrange for the contractor to contact the Administrative Assistant. The Deputy Clerk mentioned the need for an air compressor. She was asked to seek further details from the Handyman regarding the frequency with which it is needed. Cllr. Young asked Cllr. Featherstone to find a price for a small compressor and also a small trailer. The Deputy Clerk asked that consideration be given to a tipping trailer. There was discussion regarding the merits and demerits of the number and size of tractor owned by the Town Council.

9. PROPERTY RELATED MATTERS

a **Guildhall:** the Mayor said that the outstanding item for re-arrangement of the offices was the technical wiring of the Guildhall Manager's Office.

b **Old Courthouse**

- i) General Update on Repairs: the Mayor felt that the Town Council as a whole needed to think about the future use of this building. The Town Clerk reported that the specification for the works needed to resolve the damp penetration had not yet been received and she would chase it up.
- ii) Former Museum – nothing to report.
- iii) Arts Café – as per comment on damp penetration problems above.
- iv) Retail Outlet – nothing to report.

- v) Garden – a letter received from a member of the public was referred into committee. The Town Mayor said that of a volunteer who might give advice regarding the garden, dependent on having the time to do so.

c Cemetery

- i) Chapels – the Town Clerk reported that a local contractor who had been asked to provide a quote for the replacement of some slates had, in fact, carried out the work. She said that she did not think the cost would be great and the timely completion of the work would prevent any further rain getting in.

d Amenities:

- i. Allotments – the Administrative Assistant gave an update on the situation regarding asbestos situation. All instances had been photographed. There were two instances where the substance was not known and two instances where there was a possibility that the tenants would not be happy to have the roof of their sheds removed simply because it was made from asbestos. The feeling of Councillors was that all asbestos should be removed at the one time. The Administrative Assistant will continue to liaise with the contractor regarding precise arrangements for sampling and removal and will come back with an indication of cost.
- ii. War Memorial – The Town Clerk said the outcome of the Listed Building Consent process should be completed towards the end of October.
- iii. Jubilee Fountain – only two contractors had quoted to date. The Town Mayor was seeking advice from Cllr. Moore regarding possible solar powered lamps. Cllr. Walden suggested that the contractors who had been consulted already regarding the electrical aspects be asked to comment too.
- iv. Jubilee Field – Cllr. Walden said that much of the work proposed had been completed. The field would be handed over with £10,000 towards future maintenance. The Town Clerk said that Council had long had a policy that it would not take on responsibility for the Jubilee Field until there had been a clear 12 month snagging period and this policy had been supported by the District Council previously but she felt that there was now a pressure to take it on without such a period. Councillors took the opportunity to seek comment from Dist. Cllr. Hayward who was in the audience. He asked what snagging issues were thought to be likely. He felt there could be a risk that the situation could drag on like The Spiral. Cllr. Walden proposed that the views of the District Council officers and members regarding this matter be sought. Cllr. Young seconded the proposal. Agreed.

11. MATTERS OF URGENCY: None.

Cllr. Farrow 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. Leat seconded the proposal. Agreed.

12. QUOTES FOR PROPOSED WORKS:

- a) First Aid Training for Staff – Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that the matter be deferred to the next meeting pending availability of the details of the quote.
- b) Android Tablets for Councillors – Cllr. Young proposed that she would contact the Councillors affected to try to resolve their problems. The Town Clerk said that she thought the main problem appeared to be that these Councillors did not have the technology or the know-how to operate zoom. Cllr. Walden offered to go to see the Councillors concerned and said that the Town Council should provide video cameras or whatever was needed.

CLLR. YOUNG'S TECHNOLOGY HAVING FAILED TEMPORARILY, CLLR. FARROW TOOK OVER THE CHAIR. WHEN SHE RETURNED CLLR. FARROW UPDATED HER ON WHAT HAD BEEN SAID IN HER ABSENCE.

12. TENANCY MATTERS:

- a) Old Courthouse: Senior Citizens' Centre – The Town Clerk said that there was a possibility that the Care Service might wish to terminate its tenancy. Cllr. Walden said that the facility was a great asset to the local community in bringing together Senior Citizens and others for mutual social interaction. He proposed that the Care Service be offered a rent holiday until things return to normal. He pointed out that such a course of action had been agreed. He said that if their decision should remain unchanged then the Town Council should accede to their request. Cllr. Leat seconded the proposal. Agreed.
- b) Old Courthouse: Garden – a letter had been received from a member of the public regarding the presence of tables belonging to a tenant outwith the area licensed to that tenant. The Town Mayor had been to the site and seen signs placed there by the tenant. Cllr. Walden proposed that a letter be sent to the tenant requesting that these tables be relocated within the area licensed to the tenant. Councillors and staff confirmed that there were many more tables present in the garden than were permitted. Cllr. Young said that they were not complying with current legislation. Cllr. Farrow said that needs of the public need to be borne in mind.

Cllr. Young asked the Town Clerk to send a kindly letter saying that Councillors understood the problems the present situation was causing but, nonetheless, wished to ensure that the café business did not encroach on the public part of the garden to the detriment of that amenity for quite enjoyment by the public.

13. STAFFING MATTER: The Deputy Clerk gave a report on a recent incident relating to hydraulic fluid. A more detailed report will be circulated.

Signed Date