

AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF EXTRA-ORDINARY MEETING OF THE RISK ASSESSMENT AND
EMERGENCY PLANNING**

COMMITTEE

HELD AT THE GUILDHALL AT 7.00 P.M. ON MONDAY, 17th FEBRUARY 2020

1. **PRESENT**: Cllr. A.L.Young Town Mayor, (Chairman), Cllr. M.N. Adamson-Drage, Cllr. J.J. Farrow, Cllr. Mrs. S.L.N.Leat, Cllr. M. Mynard, Cllr. A.G. Sedgewick, Town Clerk (Miss H. Kirkcaldie) and the Deputy Town Clerk (Mrs. Z Adamson-Drage). No members of the press or public.
2. **APOLOGIES**: Cllr. Walden.
3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**: the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd February 2020, having been approved and adopted by the Town Council, were signed.
4. **MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**: None.
5. **PUBLIC FORUM**: None.
6. **RISK ASSESSMENT OF BUDGET FOR 2020-2021**: The Deputy Clerk reminded Councillors of how the risk scoring matrix operated. She said that Risk Assessment of strategic decisions was bound to be subjective to some extent but should be the basis on which Town Council decisions are made. If a risk score was in the red zone this should be an indication to the Council that it should not take an issue any further unless this score could be reduced later by mitigation. It was noted that formal training in strategic risk assessment and management was being arranged.

The initial consideration should be undertaken as if no controls were in place. In respect of the Precept, among the risks identified were that Councillors set too low a precept, that the request was not submitted by the deadline, that it was received late, or not at all. In terms of the Budget, among the risks identified were those of under-budgeting, the emergence of an item not included when the budget was set, failure to allow for levels of inflation or over-budgeting.

Councillors then scored the risks for the above. Consideration was then given to mitigating factors. These included maintaining healthy reserves, careful setting of the budget to include an element of contingency followed by regular monitoring of expenditure against the budget and use of insurance, observance of Standing Orders and Financial Regulations. It was noted that some risks, such as inflation levels, would have to be tolerated as they were outwith Council's control.

The outcomes of these discussions are reflected in the associated Risk Assessments. Documents will be prepared by this Committee and sent up to full Town Council for consideration and then reviewed on a regular cyclical basis.

7. **RISK ASSESSMENT OF STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE FOR 2019-2020**: The Responsible Financial Officer said that in the prior year the only statement to which a positive response had not been possible was statement 5 as there was lack of evidence of consideration by the full Town Council of Strategic or Financial Risk Assessment. Such considerations having been carried out and minuted during the course of the current year, it was felt that statement 5 could be answered as a positive on the next Annual Return. Furthermore, it could be demonstrated that the Town Council had carried out the actions which had been set out in the explanation she had submitted with the prior

year's response, such as the induction of new Councillors and the provision of information such as the Good Councillor's Handbook.

Cllr. Mrs. Leat proposed that a draft Strategic Risk Assessment be presented for discussion at the March meeting of the full Town Council. Agreed.

8. **ADOPTION OF APPROVED TEMPLATE FOR RISK ASSESSMENT:** the Responsible Financial Officer presented a sample risk register which summarised the risks assessed and what the outcome of each assessment was. Opinions on its value were varied. It was felt to be too detailed and summarised the Risk Assessment. Overall, it was considered to be unnecessarily complicated in its present form.
9. **SPECIFICATION FOR A RISK CONSULTANT:** Cllr. Young proposed that the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Mayor should draft a specification regarding health and safety and equipment and then circulate it to other members for comment. Cllr. Adamson-Drage pointed out that a Health and Safety Consultant was needed rather than a Risk Consultant. Agreed.
10. **REVIEW OF COUNCIL POLICIES:** the Town Clerk said that there had not been time to prepare any amendments for consideration. Members were asked to look through the existing documents and let her know of any areas where it was considered change was needed.
11. **UPDATE ON MEMBER TRAINING:** Devon Association of Local Councils had a member who was designing a bespoke course on Risk Management and would be delivering it shortly.

Signed Date