

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

Held at the Guildhall, on Monday 9th March 2020 at 7.00 p.m.

Present:

Town Mayor: Cllr. A.L. Young

Deputy Town Mayor Cllr. D.J. Moore

Councillors: M.N. Adamson-Drage, Ms. J.J. Farrow, M. Featherstone,
D.R.H. Hull, Mrs. S.L.N. Leat, M. Mynard,
M.D.G. Spurway, J.W. Walden and P. Wales,

The Town Clerk (Miss H. Kirkcaldie).

In attendance: Cty./Dist. Cllr. I.L. Hall (arrived towards and Dist. Cllr. A.T. Moulding.
9 Members of the public. 1 representative of the Press.

2020/0075 APOLOGIES: Cllrs. A.E. Bourner, C.A. Doherty, Mrs. A. G. Sedgewick and
Dist. Cllr. S. Jackson.

2020/0076 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: CLLRS. DOHERTY, FARROW, HULL,
MRS. LEAT AND SPURWAY EACH DECLARED PERSONAL INTERESTS AS
BEING MEMBERS OF THE AXMINSTER GUILDHALL MANAGEMENT
COMMITTEE IN RESPECT OF ANY ITEMS RELATING TO THE GUILDHALL.

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.

CLLR. SPURWAY DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF
THE MANAGEMENT TEAM AT CLOAKHAM LAWN SPORTS CENTRE.

CLLR. FARROW DECLARED AN INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF AXMINSTER
TWINNING ASSOCIATION AND A GOVERNOR OF AXMINSTER
COMMUNITY PRIMARY ACADEMY

CLLR. WALDEN DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF
AXMINSTER COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE.

CLLR. WALDEN DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING CHAIRMAN OF
THE GOVERNORS OF AXE VALLEY ACADEMY, AS A MEMBER OF
AXMINSTER SKATEPARK STEERING GROUP, AXMINSTER TWINNING
ASSOCIATION AND AS BEING SAFEGUARDING LEAD FOR AXMINSTER
YOUTH CLUB.

CLLR. HULL DECLARED A PECUNIARY INTEREST IN RESPECT OF MINUTE 7 OF
THE CEMETERY COMMITTEE AND ABSENTED HIMSELF FROM THE
CHAMBER DURING THE BUSINESS RECORDED BELOW UNDER MINUTES
2020/0093 AND 2020/0094

2020/0077 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 10TH FEBRUARY 2020: Cllr. Farrow asked that spelling of Douvres be corrected. There were no other corrections. Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Adamson-Drage, proposed that the corrected minutes be approved as an accurate record. Agreed. Cllr. Spurway, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that these be adopted as Council policy. Agreed.

2020/0078 TOWN FORUM – OLD COURTHOUSE GARDEN: A member of the public reiterated her displeasure at the continued closure of this garden outwith the trading hours of the tenants.

2020/0079 TOWN FORUM – QUALITY OF SOUND ON MEETING RECORDINGS: A member of the public stated that the quality of the sound recordings of meetings was very poor. The Deputy Mayor is trying to resolve the problems with the recording equipment.

2020/0080 TOWN FORUM – DERELICT GARAGES AT FOXHILL: A group of local residents asked that representations be made to East Devon District Council regarding the condition of these garages and pointed out that if they were to be demolished and the area used for parking this would do much to relieve the congestion caused by parking on the main route through Foxhill and Lea Combe.

2020/0081 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10TH FEBRUARY 2020 – 2020/0057 TRANSIT VAN: The Town Clerk reported receipt of the van but said that it had thrown up a fault and been taken to dealer for remedial action.

2020/0082 MATTERS OF URGENCY – CREATION OF CASUAL VACANCY: The Town Mayor said that a letter had been received from Cllr. Wales tendering his resignation with immediate effect. The Town Clerk will implement the process for notifying a casual vacancy to the public and the District Council.

2020/0083 MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 10TH FEBRUARY 2020: the accuracy of the minutes having been confirmed, Cllr. Mrs. Leat, Chairman of the Committee, proposed, seconded by Cllr. Adamson-Drage, that these be approved for accuracy. Agreed. Cllr. Mrs. Leat, seconded by Cllr. Wales, proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2020/0084 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 10TH FEBRUARY 2020: None.

2020/0085 MEETING OF AMENITIES COMMITTEE HELD ON 17TH FEBRUARY 2020: Cllr. Walden, Chairman of the Committee, proposed, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, that these be approved as an accurate record. Agreed. Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, then proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2020/0086 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE AMENITIES COMMITTEE HELD ON 17TH FEBRUARY 2020: None

2020/0087 MINUTES OF THE RISK AND EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17TH FEBRUARY 2020: Cllr. Young, Chairman of the Committee, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that these be approved as an accurate record. Agreed. Cllr. Young, Chairman of the Committee, seconded by Cllr. Farrow,

then proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2020/0088 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RISK AND EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 17th FEBRUARY 2020: None.

2020/0089 MINUTES OF THE BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24TH FEBRUARY 2020: the accuracy of the minutes having been confirmed, Cllr. Young, Chairman of the Committee, proposed, seconded by Cllr. Walden, that these be approved. Agreed. Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Waalden, then proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2020/0090 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 24TH FEBRUARY 2020: None.

2020/0091 MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24TH FEBRUARY 2020: the accuracy of the minutes having been confirmed, Cllr. Mrs. Leat, Chairman of the Committee, proposed, seconded by Cllr. Spurway, that these be approved. Agreed. Cllr. Mrs. Leat, seconded by Cllr. Hull, proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2020/0092 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 24TH FEBRUARY 2020: None.

2020/0093 MINUTES OF CEMETERY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3RD MARCH 2020: the accuracy of the minutes having been confirmed, Cllr. Spurway, Chairman of the Committee, proposed, seconded by Cllr. Young, that these be approved. Agreed. Cllr. Spurway, seconded by Cllr. Leat, proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2020/0094 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CEMETERY COMMITTEE HELD ON 3RD MARCH 2020: None.

2020/0095 MINUTES OF EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4TH MARCH 2020: the accuracy of the minutes having been confirmed, Cllr. Young, Chairman of the Committee, proposed, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, that these be approved. Agreed. Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that they be adopted as Town Council policy. Agreed.

2020/0096 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 4TH MARCH 2020: None.

2020/0097 FINANCIAL MATTERS – APPROVAL OF PAYMENTS FOR FEBRUARY 2020: These were not available for consideration due to pressure of other business.

2020/0098 FINANCIAL MATTERS – REPORTING OF ANY ITEMS APPROVED FOR EXPENDITURE BY TOWN MAYOR OR COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN: The Town Mayor had approved the following expenditure:

- i. Removal of redundant water tanks at Guildhall £459.
- ii. Installation of a dashboard camera on the new van – cost to be confirmed but in the region of £250.

2020/0099 FINANCIAL MATTERS - RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT:

in a written report, the Responsible Financial Officer said that the Value Added Tax refund of nearly £10,000 for the first three quarters of the year had been received; the change-over in energy supplier had been completed; that writing of a flexible retirement policy was in progress and other work for the pension provider was being done.

2020/0100 FINANCIAL MATTERS – UPDATE ON VEHICLE ACQUISITION: considered under Matters Arising.

2020/0101 FINANCIAL MATTERS – USE OF TOWN BUILDINGS FUND AND TOWN IMPROVEMENT FUND: there was nothing to report on this item of business.

2020/0102 FINANCIAL MATTERS – CONSIDERATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE IN RESPECT OF GRANT APPLICATIONS: Following lengthy discussion, Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that a decision regarding the grants for Axminster Gymnastics Club and Totally Locally be deferred until the Responsible Financial Officer had had time to review the wording of the policy.

Cllr. Young declared a personal interest in the application by the Job Club as her spouse was among those made redundant by Axminster Carpets.

Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Hull, proposed that the requested grant of £1000 be awarded. Agreed.

Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that no award be made to Health and Local Food For Families as its remit was deemed to be too restricted.

2020/0103 APPROVAL OF BUDGET FOR 2020-2021: Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that this be approved. Agreed.

2020/0104 FINANCIAL RISK MANAGEMENT: following discussion Cllr. Walden proposed that the relevant box in the Annual Return be answered in the negative, pending all Councillors and staff having received relevant training. Cllr. Farrow asked that it be minuted that at the extra-ordinary meeting of the Risk and Emergency Planning Committee held on 17th February members considered the potential risks associated with budget and precept in considerable detail and made their best efforts to make sure that measures were put in place to ameliorate those risks identified. It was therefore possible to demonstrate that action was being taken by the Council. Cllr. Moore seconded the proposal from Cllr. Walden. Agreed.

2020/0105 MAYORAL SPENDING: Cllrs. Young, seconded by Cllr. Leat, proposed that all spending from the Mayoral Allowance be made between the Annual Meeting of the Town Council in May one year and the end of the following March. Agreed.

2020/0106 SUPPORT FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY REDUNDANCIES AT AXMINSTER CARPETS:

CLLR. YOUNG DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS HAVING A SPOUSE MADE REDUNDANT BY THIS FIRM.

Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Hall, proposed that £2000 be set aside to support those affected, for instance by paying for hall hire so that a weekly social meeting of former employees could take place, with power to act delegated to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. Agreed.

2020/0107 PROPOSED VARIATION IN TERMS OF AGREEMENT WITH HOUSING

ASSOCIATION: Following discussion, the Town Clerk will send written details of the rewording and clarification regarding a reference to a clause not included in the details supplied. She will circulate further information once received.

2020/0108 PENSIONS DISCRETIONS POLICY: Following the recommendation from the Employment Committee, Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden proposed that the revisions to this document be approved. Agreed.

2020/0109 FLEXIBLE RETIREMENT POLICY: Following the recommendation of the Employment Committee, Cllr. Young, seconded by Cllr. Walden, proposed that this be approved. Agreed.

2020/0110 ARRANGEMENTS FOR ANNUAL PARISH MEETING: The Town Clerk said that the Guest Speaker had been confirmed and other arrangements were all in place. She urged those Councillors who were due to give reports to let her have these as soon as possible for the website.

2020/0111 FORMATION AND MEMBERSHIP OF STRATEGIC FORWARD PLANNING

COMMITTEE: Following discussions at the Buildings and Finance Committee, Cllr. Young wanted to establish a five year plan. Members to be Cllrs. Young, Moore, Farrow, Mynard, Hall, Hull, Sedgewick and Spurway.

2020/0112 LETTER FROM CHIDEOCK PARISH COUNCIL:

CLLR. WALDEN DECLARED A PECUNIARY INTEREST AS DERIVING MUCH OF HIS INCOME FROM BUSINESSES BASED ALONG THE A35 AND LEFT THE MEETING AT THIS POINT.

The feeling of members was that they would not go to local Councils for information regarding road closure but that this information would be disseminated via social media. The Town Clerk will convey this decision to Chideock Parish Council.

CLLR, WALDEN RETURNED TO THE MEETING.

2020/0113 SAFER TOWNS AND POLICE LIAISON MEETING UPDATE:

Cllr. Young said that Axminster was one of only two Towns in Devon taking part and said that there had been no further meeting regarding Safer Towns but she suggested that an open day regarding this initiative be held at the Guildhall. This suggestion will be sent to the person leading the initiative in East Devon. Agreed.

Cllr. Young invited Dist. Cllr. Hall to report on the police liaison meeting convened to improve communications between parish councils and the police. He said that there needed to be easier means of reporting matters to the police. He encouraged Councillors to look into what the new Councillor Advocate scheme offered. Cllr. Hall said that he felt that membership should include two contacts for each Council in case one should be unavailable for some reason. Cllr. Hall welcomed a recent trend to much greater cross-border co-operation between all the emergency services as this had been a stumbling block in the past. Meetings will be held bi-monthly and be rotated across the District.

The Town Mayor mentioned the Blue Light Initiative which will involve training fire officers to respond to 111 calls and said that should form part of the Safer Towns Initiative in Axminster. The scheme is already operating in Honiton.

Cllr. Farrow deprecated the lack of police resources in Axminster.

2020/0114 CORRESPONDENCE :

- a. Letters Received.
 - i. D.C.C. – re highway ditching policy.
- b. Meetings
- c. Reports Received:

2020/0115 ACTIONS UPDATE:

Safer Towns – discussed earlier in meeting with option of open day as a future event.
Quotations for Town entry signage and planters – Town Clerk and Administrative Assistant are working on this.
Pro Forma for agenda item requests is now on the Member’s Area on the website.
Proposed storage building on North Street Allotment Site – Cllr. Walden is working on this.
Identification of Land in Axminster Owned by E.D.D.C. and D.C.C. – the Administrative Assistant has not received any firm response to her enquiries to date.
Response to request from Plastic Free Axminster – has been sent.
Letter re new tenancy at Old Courthouse – to be carried forward.

2020/0116 NEXT STEPS: The Administrative Assistant summarised the main actions to take forward from the meeting as being:

- Letter to former Cllr. Wales to thank him for his service.
- Review of Grant Policy
- Revisit Financial Risk Assessment.
- Letter to solicitor regarding wording of Variation of Deed.
- Letter to Chideock Parish Council declining invitation to participate in proposal regarding A35 closures.
- Letter to D. Whelan offering to fund cost of Guildhall Hire for public meeting re Safer Towns Initiative.
- Letter to grant applicants informing them of deferral of decision.

There were no matters to be taken In Committee.

Signed Date.....