

Axminster Town Council

Office Hours
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday
10am – 12 noon

Mayor: Cllr Jill Farrow
Locum Clerk: Paul Hayward

www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk



THE GUILDHALL
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Tel. 01297 32088

Email: Clerk@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk

Minutes of the meeting of the Operations Committee held on Tuesday, 1st February 2022 at 7.00 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall

Approved at a meeting of this committee on 1st March 2022

Meeting began at 7pm.

Chair, Cllr. Walden, welcomed all in attendance and outlined fire precautions, exits etc.

Public Forum:

No members of the public in attendance. Chair closed public forum session closed at 7.05pm.

OC22/030

To note those members of the committee present:

Present: Cllr. Walden (JW) (Chair), Cllr. Spurway (MS) (Vice-Chair), Cllrs. Brooker A (AB), Farrow (JF) and Hall (CH). Cllr. Sedgewick (AS) arrived during the course of the meeting.

The Locum Town Clerk (LTC) (Paul Hayward) and 0 members of the Public.

No members of the press.

Cllr. Holt (attending as a non-member of the committee – see OP22/036)

OC22/031

To note and, if thought fit, to approve apologies (and reasons) for absence:

Apologies received from committee members Cllr. Mynard (ongoing health matter).

Approval of apology and reason proposed from Chair, seconded CH. Resolved unanimously.

OC22/032

To note members not otherwise present:

Cllr. Sedgewick had alerted Clerk to her possible late arrival.

OC22/033

To receive any declarations of interest from members of the committee in relation to items of business on this agenda and to note any dispensations previously afforded:

JF, AS & MS all declared a personal interest in agenda item OC22/037 as Councillor members of the Guildhall Management Committee.

JF declared a further personal interest as her partner is the Chair of the Guildhall Management Committee.

JF declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as her partner is an allotment tenant.

OC22/034

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Operations Committee meeting held 4th January 2022 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes:

Approval proposed by Chair, seconded by JF. Resolved unanimously.

Minutes reviewed and noted. No matters arising raised.

OC22/035

To consider any matters listed on this agenda that Councillors consider should be dealt with as confidential business as per the provisions of The Public Bodies (Admissions to meetings) Act 1960:

Chair proposed that agenda item OP22/041 iv) be considered in Part TWO in light of the commercially sensitive nature of the quote(s) to be considered. Agreed.

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OC 22/036

To consider request from Cllr. Steve Holt to join the Operation Committee:

Proposed by Chair, seconded by CH. Resolved unanimously.

Cllr. Holt joined other members on the committee.

OC22/037

To consider matters pertaining to the Axminster Guildhall building and curtilage:

i) It was proposed by Chair, seconded by CH, that provision be made at the side of the building to accommodate staff smoking activity. Expenditure to be delegated to LTC to supply. Resolved unanimously. The provision of a specific "smoking shelter" was not approved.

ii) It was proposed by Chair, seconded by JF to approve GHMC request to remove, and dispose of, the redundant and unkempt balcony seating to provide greater amenity, space and to permit 100% coverage of carpet flooring (when laid) subject to:

a) *The Guildhall Manager seeking the advice and guidance of the Fire Officer as to alternative uses for the vacant space in the balcony.*

b) *The items removed being sold by way of auction with proceeds returning to the Town Council.* Resolved unanimously.

iii) It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH to approve request to re-install steel partition shutter between bar area to create a self-contained/dual-use refreshment/catering facility. Resolved unanimously.

iv) Members received an update on repairs and maintenance of Guildhall signage and lettering (front elevation) and noted expenditure of £235 approved under Chairs delegated Authority for re-securing missing lettering and Town Crest.

v) Members considered proposals for redecoration of external front (and side) elevations of the Guildhall and directed LTC to obtain 3 quotes for further consideration by the Ops.Comm. Noted

vi) Members received update from LTC on improved/enhanced CCTV coverage and data capture on Guildhall (EXT.&INT.). Further quotes to come before Ops.Comm. at next meeting.

vii) It was proposed by Chair, seconded by JF to approve GHMC request to replace extractor fan within bar (tap) room at a cost of £132. Resolved unanimously.

viii) Members considered whether Council wishes to undertake annual LOLER testing on the three lighting winches inside the main Guildhall building. It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AB, that winches should be removed as soon as possible with lighting secured within ceiling void and the subsequent wall area redecorated thereafter. Resolved unanimously.

ix) It was proposed by JF, seconded by the Chair, to approve request for provision of a waste skip to dispose of damage/waste/redundant items from Guildhall; costs to be shared between three user groups. LTC to organise in consultation with other parties.

x) Members considered request to re-locate the Town Council's heritage items (Axminster Coat of arms with Seals Declaration, Market Town Charter Declaration and the Twinning agreements) from the main lobby into the vestibule area (by staircase). They also considered request to re-locate Mayoral pictures from Churchill Room to vestibule area, and to consider relocation of painted Town Crest board from main Guildhall room into an alternate location.

It was proposed by JF, seconded by CH, that heritage items be moved into the vestibule area, that Mayoral photos be moved onto stairwell and that Crest (Arms) Board be repainted and cleaned and mounted on wall at far end of vestibule lobby (by fire exit doors). Resolved unan.

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OC22/038

To consider matters pertaining to the Old Courthouse (OCH) complex:

i) Members considered proposals to improve public garden amenity (and maintenance thereof) and delegated authority to LTC to engage services of a gardener to perform a spring clean of the garden amenity and to discuss principles of ongoing maintenance and improvement with community volunteers and bring those ideas back to the Ops.Comm. as soon as possible.

Noted. It was also suggested that bird feeders currently in place be removed and stored safely during the works. Noted.

ii) It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, to purchase and install two additional benches * as public amenity, with costs of purchase and installation set at a maximum of £800; delegated to LTC to arrange. Resolved unanimously.

** The benches installed to be manufactured from recycled plastic or MMT (Man Made Timber) to minimise future maintenance costs for the Council.*

It was agreed that the installation of a larger "picnic" style bench on the grassed area of the public garden was not appropriate.

iii) SH spoke regarding potential quotes for architectural services in relation to potential repurposing and remodelling works at the OCH. It was noted that several architects had been approached but had declined to assist/provide quotes. Under the circumstances, it was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that Council suspend its Financial Regulations to permit the Council to appoint the suggested contractor on the basis of only one quote available. This recommendation was to be deferred to FULL Council on 14/2/2022 for final approval as the expenditure proposed was beyond the powers of the committee to approve. Resolved (5 votes for / 1 abstention).

OC22/039

To consider matters pertaining to Section 106 projects ongoing:

Chair proposed that items i) and ii) from the agenda be considered in Part TWO session due to the confidential legal and financial matters involved. Resolved unanimously.

AS arrived at 7.50pm.

iii) Chair suggested that the topic of the potential S106 "public artwork" project at Cloakham Lawns ran the risk of dividing public opinion unless managed in an appropriate manner and felt that the subject was best discussed in a wider forum at a FULL Council meeting. JF suggested the meeting date in March in light of the business already tabled for February's FULL meeting. Agreed and noted.

OC22/040

To consider matters pertaining Town Centre development and regeneration:

i) Chair apologies for the delay in getting the Signage project briefing report before members to consider and sought help from the membership to assist him. AS and SH volunteered and the matter was deferred to the next meeting of the Ops.Comm. Noted.

ii) Members considered an update on matter of potential installation of enhanced/additional Tourism "Brown" signage in the town and it was subsequently proposed by SH, seconded by CH, that the Town Council should not proceed with such an installation; the potential costs being prohibitive and not commensurate with the perceived benefit. Resolved unanimously.

iii) Members considered a proposal for provision of enhanced/improved Town Centre mapping amenity for residents and visitors. It was agreed that SH would gather together costs on various mapping and display options and bring these back to Ops.Comm. in liaison with the LTC and this matter could then be considered again. Noted.

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OC22/041

To consider matters pertaining to the Jubilee Field open space amenity:

- i) Members received an update on the transfer of land from EDDC to the Town Council. Noted.
- ii) Members received an update on the forthcoming public meeting (8/2) to consider the future shared use of the amenity space. SH presented to members.
- iii) Members considered proposals for noticeboards (three) to highlight ownership, liability, responsibility and site rules and regulations); one to be placed at each access point. LTC was directed to liaise with SH to obtain quotes and specifications to bring back before Ops.Comm. for further discussion and agreement on design, size, manufacture etc.
- iv) Chair proposed that item iv) be considered in Part TWO in light of the commercial confidential nature of the quote(s). Resolved unanimously – see below.

OC22/042

To consider matters pertaining to the Footpaths/Public Rights of Way/P3:

Nothing to consider under this agenda item.

Chair suggested that this be removed as a standing agenda item unless business arose to necessitate further consideration. Agreed.

OC22/043

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Cemetery:

- i) Members considered proposed wording/design for new consolidated entrance signage. It was proposed by CH, seconded by SH, that two A3 signs as per “option one” be purchased and installed on the two gate pillars (not on the gate itself). Resolved unanimously. LTC was also given delegated authority to arrange for the spelling mistake on the main entrance board to be corrected as soon as possible. Noted.
- ii) It was proposed by Chair, seconded by CH, to liaise with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to obtain a plaque to recognise the service graves within the cemetery site. LTC believed that there was no cost for obtaining the licence but that there might be a cost for the plaque. It was agreed that LTC should return to the Ops.Comm. with costs once known for final agreement and approval of expenditure. Noted.

OC22/044

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Allotments:

JF left the room at this point in light of her previously declared Pecuniary Interest.

- i) Members received an update on line marking improvements at Woodbury Park site from LTC. It was confirmed that no paperwork had been submitted to DCC Highways seeking these markings despite previous resolutions of the committee and directions to the former Clerk. Chair proposed that the formal process to apply for line markings be commenced. Seconded by SH. Resolved unanimously. Noted.
- ii) Members received an update from LTC re: gate replacement at North Street site. Completed. Chair thanked LTC for his efforts to bring this matter to a conclusion.
- iii) Members considered the suggestion for an adjacent pedestrian gate access at North Street. Having discussed the matter with allotments users at the site, it was felt that an additional gate was not necessary and might exacerbate ASB on the site. It was therefore agreed that no further action be taken in this regard.
- iv) Members considered request for hardstanding improvements at newly created gateway access (North St.). It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AS, that expenditure up to the value of £100 be authorised, duly delegated to the LTC to organise in conjunction with the allotment user group. Noted.

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OC22/044

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Allotments (continued):

v) Members considered proposal for purchase and installation of ECO-WC's at the 3 allotment sites as a tenant amenity. It was proposed by Chair, seconded by AB, that Council supported the principle of the installation of an Eco-WC at each site subject to the agreement that allotment users would arrange for the "waste" to be managed, treated and stored as per unit specifications. As the value of the expenditure (£3000) was higher than the powers of this committee, the committee's recommendation is to be put before Councillors at the next FULL Council meeting. Resolved unan.

LTC was directed to liaise with the allotment user groups to seek their agreement on possible siting and operational arrangements as detailed above.

JF re-joined the meeting.

OC22/045

To consider matters pertaining to Health and Safety / H&S Sub-Committee:

i) Members considered the Health and Safety Audit Report and received an update from LTC (including a review of assessment reports received to date). SH proposed, seconded by Chair, that LTC be duly delegated to arrange the missing inspections as a matter of urgency (as per costs considered) in light of recommendations within the consultant's report and in order to ensure that Council managed its H&S obligations as part of ongoing Risk Management Review. Resolved unanimously. Noted.

ii) It was proposed by AS, seconded by JF, that LTC be directed to obtain three quotes for Fire Alarm Servicing and Maintenance for the Guildhall and OCH complex as a matter of urgency. Resolved unanimously. Noted.

iii) Members considered draft Terms of Reference for the H&S sub.comm.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by CH, that these were acceptable for use by the H&S Subcomm. and LTC was directed to create the formal wording and bring back to Ops.Comm. for final approval at the next meeting. Resolved unanimously. Noted.

OC22/046

To consider update from Locum Clerk re: Welcome Back Funding capital expenditure:

i) Members reviewed the schedule of items successfully bid for (and ordered) and noted inventory but deferred consideration of the siting and location of specific items until all had been received and further progress had been made with Jubilee Field, Town Centre development, and until further discussions with EDDC re: waste collections had been undertaken and agreements reached.

OC22/047 To consider matters pertaining to Council's external liaison and representation:

i) Members considered the Town Council's potential involvement with the Totally Locally "Banners" project. SH confirmed that the EDDC Conservation officer was 100% supportive of the project. Clerk confirmed that expenditure (to support this project) would be covered under Section 144 of the LGA1972 (to promote tourism). Chair suggested that some sites would need additional brackets and potentially lanyards to prevent the banners becoming furled in high winds.

Subsequently, it was proposed by SH, seconded by Chair, that Council should support the installation of 2 banners on the Guildhall and 1 on the Old Courthouse building (both owned by the Town Council). Resolved unanimously.

LTC was directed to liaise with SH and the Totally Locally group to make the appropriate arrangements.

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OC22/048

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Centre CCTV:

LTC confirmed that system was operational and that the images were accessible from the Clerk's office (although not via "live" monitoring). Signage was being erected next week and the system commissioning/handover would therefore be complete. The issue of DPO/GDPR/SIA accreditation and certification is to be considered at a future Ops.Comm. meeting. Noted.

OC22/049

To consider proposals for new/improved/replacement amenities in the parish:

i) **It was proposed by JF, seconded by CH, that the Poplar Mount Noticeboard be replaced on a like-for-like basis at a cost of £400. Resolved unanimously. Noted.**

ii) Members received a report from LTC on a recent meeting with representative of South Western Railways regarding potential joint projects at the Axminster Railway Station site. Noted. LTC was directed to continue negotiations/enquiries regarding the "green wedge" and the provision of additional defibrillation amenity thereabouts. Chair suggested that future discussions (if project proceeded) with Lowara (who provided staff community days) and Waffle (who had a community gardening group) would be worthwhile. Noted.

This matter to be brought back to Ops.Comm. for further discussion as soon as information available. Noted.

iii) Members received a report from LTC on matters relating to improved defibrillator coverage across the town. **It was proposed by CH, seconded by Chair, that Council supported "in principle" the proposals to purchase and install additional defibrillators in key areas and "cold spots" around the town subject to planning agreements and available sites. Promotion of the project via social media, website, noticeboards etc was also welcomed. Arrangements for (and timing of) a local training & awareness event were also considered. Resolved unanimously.**

OC22/050

To consider proposals for Council assets and/or plant & equipment:

i) Members re-considered proposal for purchase of chipping equipment to assist outdoor staff in disposal of organic material from trees on Council land. It was agreed that no further action be taken in this regard due to the high costs involved, and the significant training expenditure and staff resource required to operate the equipment. Noted.

ii) Members considered request for purchase of a 3kw portable generator (or two) to assist in maintenance works where power supply is required and to provide additional support for Council's Winter/Emergency Resilience Plans. Chair proposed that any decision on purchase be deferred until LTC could seek clarity on the safe use of such equipment externally in terms of 110v vs 240v supply and use. Noted.

iii) Members considered request for petrol "post-hole borer" to assist with excavations and installations of posts, poles, fences and other items under grounds maintenance programme. Chair proposed that any decision in this regard should be deferred until the Employment Committee had made its decisions on the recruitment of additional external ground-staff as this equipment may not be necessary if said staff are not subsequently recruited. Noted.

iv) Members considered request for purchase of a tower scaffold for interior and exterior site works (at height) as an alternative to renting such equipment in when required. It was agreed that no further action be taken in this regard due to the high costs involved, and the subsequent notification (post-agenda publication) that such equipment might be already available to the Town Council. Noted.

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OC22/050

To consider proposals for Council assets and/or plant & equipment (continued):

v) Members consider quotation for bodywork repairs to Council's works vehicle (identified during recent service). **Chair proposed that Council's financial regulations be suspended to allow the Council to accept one single quote for the repair works identified. Seconded JF. Resolved unan.** LTC directed to make arrangements as a matter of urgency.

LTC was also directed to seek an early settlement figure for the extant van lease agreement as a point of interest. Noted.

OC22/051

Chair's Announcements / Matters of Urgency to be noted:

Chair noted that Council had received correspondence from DCC regarding the persistent interference with street furniture outside of the River Cottage canteen (adjacent to the pelican crossing). It was suggested by Chair, supported by CH, that Council write (via the LTC) to the Lord of the Manor, to ask his assistance in helping to end this interference, which often happened on or around market days. Agreed unanimously. Noted.

Another issue was raised by the LTC regarding recent correspondence relating to Council's Cemetery Policy in relation to a particularly delicate and sensitive issue. It was suggested by Chair that this matter be brought back to Ops.Comm. in March to be considered in Part TWO session. Noted.

Finally, on the subject of the formal opening of the Jubilee Field (once legal formalities had been completed), CH suggested that the Deputy Lieutenant of Devon (DLD) be invited to attend and "cut the ribbon". Chair disagreed and stated that this honour and duty should fall to the Town Mayor (presiding at the time). CH offered a compromise suggestion whereby the DLD should be invited to attend, with the Mayor carrying out the relevant Civic duties on behalf of the town. This suggestion was well received and agreed upon.

OC22/052:

Vice-Chair of Committee (Cllr. Spurway) 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. Seconded by Chair. Resolved.

Part ONE recording was terminated.

Meeting moved into Part TWO committee session with members of the public and press excluded.

See minutes continued overleaf.

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OC 22/041(iv) (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to the Jubilee Field open space amenity:

This matter having been proposed for consideration as a Part TWO agenda item.

iv) It was proposed by Chair, seconded by CH, that Council purchase 6 bulk bags of aggregate to create a temporary hardstanding at the Boxfield Road entrance to the Jubilee Field; LTC to be delegated to arrange installation and delivery of amenity. Resolved unanimously.

OC 22/053 (IC)

To consider quotes received for tree and hedge maintenance at cemetery sites:

i) It was proposed by Chair, seconded by JF, that Contractor G be commissioned to undertake all of the tree (and hedge) works identified at the Cemetery site, for the value agreed upon, subject to clarification by the LTC of their Public Liability cover and their relevant certifications for these works. Resolved unanimously.

LTC directed to make the necessary arrangements.

OC 22/054 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to ongoing Section 106 Play project at Raymonds Hill.

LC provided a report following a successful negotiation with the landowner. The installation of the play equipment under S106 agreement could continue subject to agreement on lease terms and the associated legal formalities. It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that LTC be afforded delegated authority to proceed with the necessary formalities regarding the establishment of a suitable lease (in consultation with the EDDC Section 106 Officer) and to note the inclusion in the plans of a new pedestrian gateway in the western fence boundary to negate the need for users to access via the vehicular gateway. Resolved unanimously.

OC 22/055 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to ongoing Section 106 skatepark project at Cloakham Lawns:

LC provided a report following a recent update from EDDC Estates and Legal team.

Matters were reaching completion regarding the land transfer, sub-lease and planning for the delivery of the skatepark. LTC was asked to maintain contact with all parties and report back to Ops.Comm. / Council prior to any financial assistance / requests being considered to assist the completion of the project. Noted.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 21.30hrs.

Signed Date: 1st March 2022