

# Axminster Town Council

Office Hours  
Monday to Thursday  
9am – 4pm

Mayor: Cllr Jill Farrow  
Town Clerk: Paul Hayward

[www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk](http://www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk)



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**Minutes of the meeting of the Operations Committee held on Monday,  
03 February 2025 at 7.30 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall**

**Minutes approved 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025: Part ONE version**

**Present:** Cllrs Walden (JW) (Chair), Bridge (PB), Burrough (KB), Dowdeswell (MD), Farrow (JF) (Mayor), Leat (SL), Osborn (RO), Paice (EP), Price (JP), Willey (DW).

*Meeting was quorate.*

**Also in attendance was the Clerk to the Council, Paul Hayward, the Deputy Clerk, Sarah Jackson and Council Admin Assistant, Katie Edgell.**

1 member of the public in attendance.

**Meeting began at 7.30pm.**

The Presiding Chair of the Committee, JW, welcomed all in attendance and outlined the fire precautions, exits etc and ran through the agenda procedure and protocol, noting the agenda statements as published.

## **Public Forum:**

No members of the public wished to speak.

Chair subsequently closed the public forum session at 7.39pm.

## **OC25/001**

**To note members of the committee present:**

As detailed above.

## **OC25/002**

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

(LGA 1972 S.85 (1))

Apologies have been received from Cllr Warwick and Cllr Hurren. These apologies were noted, along with the reasons for them.

**JW proposed that these apologies and the reason for them be accepted. Seconded by JP. Resolved.**

*Continued overleaf*

Approved Minutes of the Operations Committee meeting held 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025 (Part One version)

### **OC25/003**

**To note members of the Committee not otherwise in attendance.**

There were none.

### **OC25/004**

**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.**

*This does not preclude the need for members to declare any additional interests that may arise during the meeting.*

*At the FULL Council meeting held 10/06/2024, Cllr. Osborn was afforded a dispensation \* to discuss and vote upon matters pertaining to allotments. This dispensation applies until May 2027 (unless rescinded before that date) and is afforded with respect to Cllr. Osborn's disclosable pecuniary and personal interests as set out in the Register of Members Interests. \* **Localism Act 2011 (s.33)**.*

No other declarations of interest were made.

### **OC25/005**

**To consider and, if thought fit, approve the minutes of the Operations Committee meeting held 05 August 2024 and to consider any matters arising (not included within this agenda as business to be attended to).**

The Chair proposed approval of these minutes. Seconded by JP. Approval of minutes was resolved unanimously.

Action: Chair signed the approved minutes accordingly.

#### **Matters Arising**

**i) A matter pertaining to the cemetery compound storage area was raised.**

The Clerk sought the direction to revert to the original proposal to install hard fencing around the compound as the less costly alternative had failed due to the two recent storm events.

**Actions:** Clerk, please cost up a hard fencing solution and bring it to the Operations Committee Chair for delegated approval.

**ii) Cloud Migration Update.**

The Clerk provided an update about the Cloud migration project, including the challenges of finding a third like-for-like quote.

**Actions:** Clerk, please seek a third quote and work with office staff to begin cleansing and restructuring the data held on the Council's server in preparation for migration to the cloud.

### **OC25/006**

**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 (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.**

Four matters were already tabled for Part Two consideration - agenda items OC25/017(IC) to OC25/020 (IC).  
Agreed.

### **OC25/007**

**To consider whether the Committee wishes to elect a Vice-Chair of the Committee for the remaining Council calendar year i.e. until May 2025**

It was agreed that a Vice-Chair should not be elected at this meeting.

*Continued overleaf*

## Operations Committee business to be considered:

### OC25/008

#### To consider matters pertaining to the Town Cemetery:

##### i) To consider Cemetery (burial, memorial and administration) fees for Financial Year 25-26.

The Clerk introduced the report and highlighted the variances in the fees at other cemeteries, some in line with Axminster's fees and others significantly higher. He reported that the money received for burials in the Cemetery does not cover the cost of managing and maintaining them, which was not unexpected. The Clerk also highlighted that the Cemetery would require some significant capital investment in the medium to long term, so the Council should bear this in mind when considering this and future price increases this year and moving ahead. The Clerk reminded Councillors that the income from the Cemetery should not be included in the Council's General Reserves but should be accounted for separately in an earmarked reserve, per the Internal Auditor's advice.

Key points of discussion were:

- A perceived decline in the rate of traditional burials and what impact any price rise would have.
- Council's past reluctance to raise fees has created challenges in the present and future.
- General maintenance costs and the cost of materials have increased.
- Future burial space provision.

JF proposed that Fees should increase by a modest 10% for the Financial Year 2025/26, and that the Strategy and Finance Committee could, at the end of the year, consider how the cemetery income held in the new sinking fund could deliver cemetery improvements or the purchase of future cemetery land. Seconded by JW. There were 9 votes for, 1 against, Resolved.

**Actions:** Clerk, please update the burial fees sheet and produce a report for a future Strategy and Finance Committee meeting.

### OC25/009

#### To consider matters pertaining to Town Amenity and services:

##### i) To consider proposals for additional bench and information amenity on the "Green Wedge" (railway station concourse).

The Committee agreed to install the memorial bench and noticeboard, but a query was raised about the damaged concrete posts along the road toward the rear of the green wedge and whether the Town Council is responsible for those.

The Clerk explained that the Town Council does not formally own it but is adopting it for public amenity purposes following extensive but unsuccessful investigations into the ownership of the parcel of land. Improvement to the area will be a long-term process, and as further amenities are added, a site safety risk assessment will be required.

It was proposed by JW that a bench be purchased at the cost of £550 (plus carriage and VAT) using unearmarked reserves in memorial of the late former Mayor, Anni Young. The Guildhall noticeboard should be refurbished, and both amenities should be subsequently installed at the Green Wedge. Seconded by JP Resolved unanimously.

**Actions:** Clerk, please order the bench and organise refurbishment of the noticeboard. Please work with the Deputy Clerk to arrange their installation.

*Continued overleaf*

**ii) To consider proposals for the replacement of bus stops at Gamberlake following recent vandalism.**

There was broad consensus that the covered bus shelter and seating area was an amenity that the Council did not want to lose, although it was felt that a replacement featuring a roof and open front with no glazing would be preferable as it would reduce the risk of graffiti and improve visibility for both passengers and bus drivers.

It was proposed by JP that the Clerk explore options for a roofed, non-glazed solution which included the provision of seating. Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

**Actions:** Clerk, please work with the Deputy Clerk to cost up some suitable solutions for the Operations Committee to consider.

**iii) To consider proposals for improvements to Town Centre CCTV coverage; to also consider whether to seek funding / grant assistance from Devon and Cornwall Police (POCA).**

The Clerk highlighted the grants available from the Proceeds of Crime Act fund and the office of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The Chair raised concerns that he felt the Council should not spend its money on CCTV, which is primarily used by the Police service but was supportive of sourcing capital funding for it through other external streams.

It was proposed by JW that the Town Council explore financing the CCTV through third-party grants outside of the Council's reserves. Seconded by DW. Resolved unanimously.

**Actions:** Clerk, please apply for grant funding to deliver additional town centre CCTV to cover some of the existing blind spots.

## **OC25/010**

**To consider matters pertaining to administrative matters within the Town Council.**

**i) To consider proposals for administrative spend to ensure preparedness for Operation London Bridge.**

It was proposed by JW that the Council staff purchase the replacement items needed for Operation London Bridge, which will be implemented in the event of the death of the monarch.

Seconded by JF. Resolved unanimously.

**Actions:** Clerk, please organise the purchase of Operation London Bridge items, including a new Union Flag, an official framed photograph of the King, and other smaller ancillary items within the budget of £200.

## **OC25/011**

**To consider matters pertaining to the Guildhall building and venue.**

**i) To receive a update report from Clerk on the CAP24 (EDDC) project and to seek direction on some minor alterations to the project design in light of new information received; to consider alternative spend within overall project budget.**

The Clerk updated the Committee that the new battery system had now been fitted, doubling the Guildhall's green energy storage capacity in preparation for installing the new HVAC cooling and heating system to replace the existing gas heating in the Guildhall. The Clerk sought approval to spend £1,355 plus VAT to cover the cost of three heaters for the dressing room area, which unfortunately were missed from the original project plan.

*Continued overleaf*

The Clerk reported on the outcome of the survey to mount the proposed access gantry in the roof space of the Guildhall to enable roof insulation to be installed to complement the new heating system. Unfortunately, while creating a new gantry is possible, it is also cost-prohibitive. However, an alternative solution could be implemented, which does not deliver a gantry but still provides two access panels and roof insulation, fitted section by section, working from a scaffold tower.

JW asked if the old boilers and radiators would be removed following the installation of the electric heaters and if the gas supply be cut off to reduce standing charges. The Clerk explained that the gas heating does not need to be removed in order to terminate the gas supply and that removal of the wet system would come at an additional cost. The Clerk said he would establish those costs and explore if any decarbonisation grants could be applied for to fund those works.

**It was proposed by JW that the Council proceed with installing two new access hatches and loft insulation, as well as purchase the electric heaters for the dressing rooms and the grant-funded scaffolding tower, but that the Council should not proceed with the installation of a gantry. Seconded by JP. Resolved unanimously.**

**Action:** Clerk, please:

- Purchase the required dressing room heaters and the equipment to install the insulation in the Guildhall roof.
- Explore the costs associated with removing the wet heating system and find out if any decarbonisation grants are available to fund those works.
- Publish the carbon savings publicly once the definitive savings are known and can be proven.

Further discussions followed surrounding the Guildhall's revenue accounts.

The Clerk was instructed to produce a financial report at the end of the financial year, which could also be published on the website to enable the Committee to have greater insight into the commercial and community-focused revenue streams generated by the Guildhall.

**ii) To consider spend authority for the remainder of the Guildhall "roadside" planter project (scheduled for Spring 2025).**

The Clerk explained that the direction to undertake this work had already been given by a previous resolution but that approval for the associated budget was now needed.

**It was proposed by JW that the Clerk proceed with the planter project with a budget of up to £1,200. Seconded by KB. Resolved unanimously.**

**Action:** Clerk, please purchase the necessary materials and work with the Deputy Clerk to arrange the construction of the new planters.

**iii) To consider proposals for the installation of a KITT Anaphylaxis Unit at the Guildhall to operate alongside the defibrillators and bleed control units (Reason; risk assessment and mitigation).**

Councillors felt that those who suffer from anaphylaxis should take responsibility for their own medical needs and ensure that they carry the appropriate medication. Concerns were raised about liability if the equipment was misused.

**It was proposed by JW that the Town Council do not proceed with this project. Seconded by LP. There were 9 votes for, 1 abstention. Resolved.**

**Actions:** The Clerk to check that there is appropriate signage on display to highlight that peanuts (or other allergens) are on sale or may be present at the Guildhall.

*Continued overleaf*

iv) **To consider capital expenditure on assets and amenities at the Guildhall (following recent equipment malfunction and depreciation);**

**1) Floor cleaning equipment**

It was proposed by JW that the sum of £1,143 be spent on Floor Cleaning equipment.  
Seconded by KB. Resolved unanimously.

**Actions:** Clerk, please instruct the Guildhall Manager to purchase a new floor cleaner.

**2) Stage access equipment**

The Clerk introduced the item and explained that the request was to replace the demountable wooden stage steps with metal collapsible ones. He detailed why the current steps were unsuitable, hard to store, and caused progressive damage to the stage, and he stated that modern options featured a handrail for safety purposes.

Key discussion points were:

- What were they used for, and by whom?
- Would handrails obscure the view of the stage?
- Was there a necessity for handrails as per health and safety and accessibility legislation?
- Could acts that use them reasonably be asked to bring their own as part of their set?
- Could the existing stairs be repaired?

It was proposed by JW from the Chair that stairs should not be purchased.  
Resolved unanimously.

**3) Technical / AV operations**

JP explained the request was to set up a permanent and secure mini-lighting desk to facilitate the ongoing development of the new and existing staff without wasting significant time setting up the equipment. Cllr Price also explained that it would enable additional ad hoc lighting adjustments for hall users when necessary.

It was proposed by JF that the sum of £354 (plus VAT) be spent on the proposed mini-lighting desk.  
Seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

**Actions:** Clerk, please liaise with the Guildhall Manager to arrange the purchase and installation of the mini-lighting desk.

**4) Table asset acquisition**

It was proposed by JW that this be deferred until after the end of the financial year to see if there are available funds for the purchase of tables.  
Seconded by KB. Resolved unanimously.

**Actions:** Clerk, please bring this item back alongside the end-of-year accounts.

*Continued overleaf*

v) **To consider matters pertaining to performance fees and charges for forthcoming financial year.**

The Clerk outlined the challenges around the Committee having oversight over every booking at the Guildhall as it is not a mechanism which is fleet of foot enough to capitalise on commercial opportunities. However, he noted that each booking comes with a financial risk and sought direction about what the spending threshold should be before committee approval is required.

Key points of discussion:

- A query was raised about why some successful events at other venues are not booked at the Guildhall.
- The payment terms for different types of bookings
- Praise for the Guildhall Manager for turning the venue around.
- Recognition that booking acts by Committee is not an effective route in a commercial environment.
- The responsibility to the taxpayer to ensure that profit from the commercial bookings subsidises the community focused activities of the Guildhall rather than other commercial activities.

JW stressed that this was the job of the Guildhall Manager, that he should be trusted to make a professional judgement, and that the success of the bookings should be a matter for the Clerk to consider as part of appraising the Guildhall Manager's performance.

JP commented that no booking is without risk and that the nature of the industry is that some acts will generate a loss. This should be borne in mind, and the Guildhall Manager should not be criticised unreasonably in such events.

No cap or threshold to seek approval was set.

## **OC25/012**

### **To consider matters pertaining to allotment amenity/provision in the town.**

i) **To consider matters pertaining to the keeping of livestock on Town Council allotments (to receive a report from Clerk, Deputy Clerk and Admin. Assistant).**

- 1) Definitions of "livestock"; *statutory legislation applies***
- 2) Charges applicable (to be considered)**
- 3) Policy wording (to be considered)**
- 4) Veterinary inspections / animal welfare / external guidance (to be considered)**
- 5) 3<sup>rd</sup> Party oversight / warden duties (to be considered)**

The Deputy Clerk and Admin Assistant outlined the challenges faced with the current Allotment Rules and Regulations concerning the keeping of livestock and the necessity for compliance with The Allotment Act 1950, which is a very old piece of legislation. They explained that this was becoming more topical as there has been an increase in the number of new plot holders expressing an interest in keeping a variety of livestock but that there was not the in-house expertise to competently assess animal welfare at this time.

Key points of discussion were:

- The responsibility for undertaking any animal welfare checks should rest with the individual plot-holder and any associated costs borne by them.
- The responsibility of the Council to ensure the compliance of plot-holders with the regulations.
- Which fowl should be considered acceptable to keep.
- The legal grounds and statutory instruments that might enable the Council to refuse the keeping of livestock.
- Additional administration is required for the inspection and management of plots with livestock.

**Actions:** Clerk, please seek advice on this matter from NALC and other professional bodies. Also, to draw up some proposals with the Deputy Clerk and Admin Assistant for consideration at a future meeting.

*Continued overleaf*

### **OC25/013**

**To consider matters pertaining to Emergency Planning.**

i) **To consider proposals for nominal funding of ancillary costs relating to EDDC/EA Flood Awareness drop-in session at Axminster Guildhall (25 February 2025).**

It was proposed by JW from the Chair that the hire charge of approximately £50 for use of the Guildhall for the event be covered by Axminster Town Council's Emergency Plan budget.

Resolved unanimously.

**Actions:** Clerk, please advise the Guildhall Manager and the hirer accordingly.

### **OC25/014**

**Chair's Announcements / Matters of Urgency for discussion only to be noted:**

There were 2 matters of urgency noted: community lunches and antisocial behaviour at The Cricketers.

### **OC25/015**

**Date of next scheduled meeting for the Committee; 31 March 2025 – 7pm (Guildhall)**

Future committee meetings: See the 2025 meeting calendar.

### **OC25/016**

SL 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) should 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 JW. Resolved unanimously.

## **Matters to be considered in committee session (Part Two):**

**The items of business listed below and any others from this agenda to be agreed upon by members of the Committee if and when appropriate (see OC25/006)**

### **OC25/017 (IC)**

**To consider security matters pertaining to the Guildhall deemed sensitive / confidential:**

*This matter is deemed confidential as it pertains to security / employment matters.*

A suggestion was made about the possible implementation of bodycams for staff. It was felt that as no personal security concerns had been raised by staff, and considering recent CCTV and panic alarm installation at the Guildhall, bodycams were not necessary at this time.

**Actions:** Clerk, please proceed with arranging conflict resolution training.

### **OC25/018 (IC)**

**To consider matters pertaining to the Guildhall hire charges deemed commercially confidential:**

*This matter is deemed confidential as it pertains to 3<sup>rd</sup> party hire charges.*

It was proposed by JW from the Chair that the Guildhall Manager bring forward a report on the costs associated with community and commercial hirers alongside a more simplified pricing structure.

Resolved unanimously.

**Actions:** Clerk, please liaise with the Guildhall Manager and bring forward a report in March.

*Continued overleaf*



**OC25/019 (IC)**

**To consider matters pertaining to the Town Council's information retention protocol.**

*This matter is deemed confidential as it pertains to 3<sup>rd</sup> party legal agreements.*

The Clerk outlined the proposal to end the relationship with the solicitors who currently hold various legal documents for the Council and instead store them securely on site.

It was proposed by JW from the Chair that the Council should recover and copy the documents currently in storage at the solicitors and purchase the proposed fireproof storage solution for £60 (plus VAT). Resolved unanimously.

**Actions:** Clerk, please recover the Council's legal documents, purchase storage and make digital and certified copies.

**OC25/020 (IC)**

**To consider matters pertaining to correspondence from a commercial tenant**

*This matter is deemed confidential as it pertains to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party tenant.*

It was proposed by JF that the request be refused. Seconded by MD. There were 9 votes for, 1 abstention. Resolved.

**Actions:** Clerk, please correspond with the tenant accordingly.

**With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 22:02 hrs.**

Signed ..... Date: 31/03/2025

**Minutes of the meeting of the Operations Committee held on Monday,  
03 February 2025 at 7.30 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall  
Minutes approved 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025: Part ONE version (Redacted)**