

Axminster Town Council

Office Hours
Monday to Thursday
9am – 4pm

Mayor: Cllr Jill Farrow
Town Clerk: Paul Hayward

www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk



THE GUILDHALL
WEST STREET
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EX13 5NX

Tel. 01297 32088

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**Minutes of the meeting of the Operations Committee held on Tuesday,
4th September 2023 at 7.00 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall
Minutes approved 6th November 2023: Part ONE version (Redacted)**

**Present: Cllrs. Walden (Chair), Brooker (Vice-Chair), Burrough and Paice.
Meeting was quorate.**

Also in attendance was the Clerk to the Council, Paul Hayward.
One member of the public in attendance.

Meeting began at 7.00pm.

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

Public Forum:

Mr Bryan Ball spoke on the matter of flower planters in the town and their preferred location and with regards to the ongoing repair to the Jubilee fountain which sustained structural damage and is in need of repair. Furthermore, he reported the loss of the circular “public” bench on the Minster Green around the large Yew Tree on the Old Courthouse side of the church. Clerk offered to follow these reports up with the relevant authorities.

Chair thanks the speaker for his contribution and continued help and efforts around the town and subsequently closed the public forum session at 7.10pm.

OC23/046

To note members of the committee present:
As detailed above.

OC23/047

**To note and, if thought fit, to approve apologies (and reasons for absence):
(LGA 1972 S.85 (1))**

Cllr. Farrow sent her apologies for absence due to illness.

Chair proposed that this apology be accepted, and the absence approved.

Seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Cllr. Willey subsequently sent his apologies (via email) due to a conflicting engagement. Noted.

OC23/048

To note members of the committee not otherwise in attendance.
Cllr. Langdon. Noted

OC23/049

**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.**
None declared.

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OC23/050

To consider and, if thought fit, approve the minutes of the Operations Committee meeting held 5th June 2023 and to consider any matters arising (not included within this agenda as business to be attended to.)

i) Chair proposed approval of these minutes. Seconded by Vice-Chair.

Resolved unanimously.

Chair signed the approved minutes accordingly.

ii) Clerk outlined those matters outstanding/arising from the previous meeting that had not been included in this meeting agenda. Noted with thanks.

OC23/051

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.

Chair proposed that a matter of urgency to be considered under agenda item OC23/059 be discussed in Part One as it was in the public interest to be aware of the matter. Noted and agreed.

Operations Committee business to be considered:

OC23/052

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

i) To note electrical works undertaken under delegated authority to enable letting completion (RS).
Noted that works to the value of £192 had been actioned via the Clerk's delegated authority.

ii) To receive update on recent letting of the retail shop (former TIC).

Noted that the premises had now been let to The Fossil Academy.

iii) To consider matters pertaining to specific tenancy matters (this item will be considered as a Part Two agenda item – see below OC23/062)

Noted. See below.

OC23/053

To consider matters pertaining to Axminster Town Centre incl. development and regeneration:

i) Update on SWR funded E-Bikes / Green Wedge project.

Clerk provided a verbal report to members on progress and on funding for the project. Noted.

ii) Update on town signage installations; Clerk to speak on this matter.

Clerk provided a verbal report to members on progress of the projects. Noted.

Continued overleaf

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OC23/054

To consider matters pertaining to the Guildhall building and curtilage (including Council offices):

i) To note that a Guildhall Sub-Committee has been formed by way of a FULL Council resolution but that this Sub-Committee has not yet met; members of OPSCOMM are therefore asked to consider the following matters which require attention/consideration.

Noted. Clerk was asked to arrange the convening of the inaugural meeting as soon as could be arranged, in conjunction with committee members and taking into account other diary bookings.

ii) To note that the Town Council assumed full governance for the operation, licensing and maintenance of the Guildhall building as from the 1st August 2023; to also note the transfer of the premises licence to the Town Council on the same date and the transfer of the employees (under TUPE regulations) as of the same date.

Noted. Clerk was thanked by Chair for his efforts to bring this matter to a conclusion as directed.

iii) To ratify the recent expenditure (approved under Chair's delegated authority) on additional AV equipment to the value of £1045 to enable the full audio-link between the stage and the tech team (from balcony).

Proposed by Chair. Seconded by EP. Resolved unanimously.

iv)a) To ratify the recent expenditure (approved under Chair's delegated authority) on digital till equipment to the value of £1179 to ensure full auditing of bar sales, together with digital inventory and cash-transaction security.

Proposed by Chair. Seconded by EP. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please note and action accordingly.

iv)b) To consider the request for a 3rd system (extension) for the upstairs bar area at a cost of £448 together with an additional tablet device to link the systems together; this expenditure to be taken from existing GH donation reserve.

Proposed by Chair. Seconded by KB. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please note and action accordingly.

v) To receive report from Clerk on transfer of PPL PRS licence from the former GMC charity to the Town Council.

Report noted. KB offered to liaise with Clerk to seek assistance to try and reduce the PRS/PPL liability as quoted by that organisation as it seemed excessively high. **Noted with thanks.**

vi) To receive report from Clerk on recent grant application for installation of solar PV array on Guildhall premises and to consider next steps (pending grant application decision) in regard to potential heating & cooling installations in the Guildhall building.

Approval of an EDDC Sustainability/decarbonisation Grant of £20,000 noted with thanks.

Clerk sought agreement to proceed with a further associated grant application to the value of £19862 to the Wolfson Foundation for additional eco-efficiency works at the Guildhall.

Proposed from the Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please proceed and keep committee/Council up to date with application progress.

vii) To consider request to install an automatic extraction fan into the bar cellar room to alleviate damp/odour.

Proposed by Chair with a expenditure limit of £500. Seconded by KB. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please note and action accordingly in liaison with the Guildhall Manager.

viii) To note receipt of assets (equipment), bar stock and cash donation following governance transfer 1st August 2023.

Noted with thanks. Clerk confirmed that the Council's asset register and accounts/cashbook had been duly amended/revised to take these donations into account.

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OC23/055

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

i) To consider the ongoing maintenance and ownership of a bus shelter located on the westbound section of the A35 at Raymonds Hill (west of Hunters Lodge Inn) which is currently owned by Axminster Town Council but which is situated in Uplyme Parish. (This subject arose after a complaint from a resident of Uplyme regarding the condition of the shelter and confirmation from the Uplyme Parish Council Clerk that the asset belongs to this authority not theirs and that they do not wish to acquire the asset from ATC).

After discussion, it was proposed by Chair, seconded by KB, that the Town Council continue with the maintenance and ownership of the bus shelter for the time being, with Clerk to liaise with the Grounds Maintenance team to arrange accordingly. Resolved unanimously.

ii) To receive update from Clerk following recent discussions with the owner of land known as Belle Vue (linking West Street with Shand Park) and the issues relating to overgrowth and general amenity & accessibility for residents.

Report and update noted. Clerk was asked to continue liaising with the store management to address the complaints being raised/received from residents and to try and encourage the site owners to deal with the slippery steps and pathways prior to the autumn/winter period.

It was confirmed that the Town Council is not responsible for the steps or walkway and Chair stressed that Town Council operatives were not to be employed cleaning this area at taxpayers expense. Noted.

Clerk: Please correspond with Tesco Stores accordingly and create a suitable social media post to highlight the continuing dialogue and need for the site owner to deal with their responsibilities.

iii) To consider donation (in the form of tools and hardware) to the Town Council and to confirm that the Council wishes to accept the donation, without encumbrance.

Chair proposed that the unencumbered donation (value approximately £2000) be accepted with thanks and that Council's storage facilities be used to accommodate the racking, hardware and materials donated. Seconded Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

OC23/056

To consider matters pertaining to allotments in the parish:

i) To consider request from tenant that the use of portable barbeques be allowed within allotment plots as a tenant amenity for the purposes of personal recreation.

After discussion and debate, it was proposed by Chair, seconded by EP, that the use of all barbeques (portable, disposable, gas or charcoal) be banned entirely on the 3 allotment sites as a public safety measure (and to avoid nuisance to other tenants) and that the Allotment Regulations be duly amended to that effect. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please action accordingly in conjunction with the Administration Assistant.

ii) To consider whether this Council wishes to adopt a defined set of Chicken-Keeping regulations (following requests from tenants) which will apply across the three allotment sites.

Chair noted the work already undertaken by the Administration team and deferred the matter to the next meeting of the Operations Committee to allow time for a further report to be prepared using current livestock guidance and to allow comparisons with other local authorities and the Allotment Society. Noted. Clerk: please action accordingly.

Continued overleaf.

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OC23/057

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Cemetery:

i) To consider the establishment and adoption of a formal Cemetery Exhumations Policy.

Chair suggested that a suitable policy be prepared by the Clerk and Admin team and be brought back to the committee for review and adoption. This is to ensure that such a policy is available for use if called upon. Noted. Clerk: Please action accordingly.

ii) To receive a report from Clerk on options for the creation of enhanced/improved hard-standing adjacent to the entrance of Z section.

iii) To consider proposals for the use of the lower cemetery field as a temporary community orchard (in conjunction with the Axminster Climate Action Group).

iv) To consider feasibility, costings & access for the establishment of a suitable hard-standing area at the Chard Road (western) boundary of the lower cemetery field for the use of council operatives, funeral vehicles and mourners/visitors [to include a link route into Z section for vehicles and skip access].

Chair agreed to consider these three sub-items as one composite agenda item given the related nature of them all. After discussion, it was proposed by the Chair, seconded by KB, that the ACAG group be permitted to create a small community orchard on the lower cemetery field site using tree stock designed to be shallow rooted and suitable for removal in the future without difficulty. Furthermore, that the "whip" stock currently bedded in, be used to create a "tree and hedge" boundary line between the field and the EDDC land adjacent (former Millwey Rise FC pitch). Furthermore, that Clerk be directed to obtain quotes for:

1) The creation of a hard-standing area at the Chard Road end of the field for the purposes of providing parking amenity for cemetery staff, visitors and mourners with a pedestrian path running into the cemetery main site.

2) The creation of a permanent hard-standing road access from Z section onto the Chard Road to provide a circular "in and out" access route for cemetery staff, service vehicles and funeral vehicles.

3) The creation of a gated, secure hard-standing service area adjacent to Z section to provide storage (obscured from view) of skips, and other storage/maintenance chattels and services.

4) The creation of a wild-flower meadow (with willow tree planting) between the proposed community orchard and the service area in conjunction with the ACAG project.

Clerk: Please note and take this project forward with the parties concerned and obtain quotes as quickly as possible for further consideration by this committee.

Continued overleaf.

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OC23/058

To consider matters pertaining to Council plant/equipment and vehicles:

i) To note acquisition of new works vehicle under contract terms previously approved by resolution.

Noted. Chair proposed that Clerk be afforded delegated authority to provide necessary storage and racking amenity within the van to maximise the usage and functionality of the new vehicle. Agreed by all, costs to be taken from existing maintenance budgets.

ii) To consider options and costings for interior storage installations and exterior decal signage (to ensure visibility, brand awareness and to accord with Chapter 8 Highway Maintenance regulations).

After review of designs, and costings from suppliers (both local), it was proposed by Chair, seconded by Vice-Chair that design Option Two (half-wrap) – at a cost of £725 – be approved. There were two votes for, two votes against (on the grounds that the simpler design was cheaper). As the vote was tied, the Chair exercise his right to use a casting vote which he did for the motion as proposed. Therefore the matter was resolved 2/2 then 3/2 for.

Chair asked that thanks be conveyed to the Council administrator for the design put forward which members felt would be a great advert for the Town Council. Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

OC23/059

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

Clerk reported that an urgent matter had arisen regarding a proposed Ice Skating event to be held on the 17th December which, despite the Guildhall Manager's best efforts to attract external sponsorship and funding, was still likely to result in a loss to the Guildhall, even if tickets were priced at £15 per adult and £10 per child, which members felt was too high so close to Christmas.

It was proposed by the Chair that the event be reluctantly cancelled but that efforts should be made to host a similar event in 2024 giving more time to fundraise and plan a package of associated events to allow some offsetting of the event costs to allow a reduction in ticket prices to allow the event to be a more community-focused affair. Seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please liaise with the Guildhall Manager to arrange the cancellation of the event and start a dialogue to seek the hosting of a similar event in 2024.

OC23/060

Date of next scheduled meeting for the committee; 6th November 2023 – 7pm (Guildhall)

Noted.

Continued overleaf.

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OC23/061

Vice-Chair 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 unanimously.

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

OC23/062 (IC) – see earlier agenda item (OC23/052)

To consider matters pertaining to specific Old Courthouse tenancies.

i) Matters pertaining to commercial tenancies of the Old Courthouse complex which require consideration but which are considered confidential due to the commercially sensitive nature of the business to be considered and as the tenancies themselves are confidential due to the information likely to be considered by members.

After discussion, the Chair proposed three actions relating to the OCH tenancy. Seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk to liaise with Cllr. Brooker regarding the potential options available and bring quotes back to this committee when it next meets. Noted.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 20.35hrs.

Signed Date.....

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4th September 2023 at 7.00 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall

Minutes approved 6/11/2023: Part ONE version (Redacted)