

Axminster Town Council

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

Mayor: Cllr Jill Farrow
Town Clerk: Paul Hayward

www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk



THE GUILDHALL
WEST STREET
AXMINSTER
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EX13 5NX

Tel. 01297 32088

Email: Clerk@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk

**Minutes of the meeting of the Operations Committee held on Tuesday,
7th June 2022 at 7.00 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall**
Minutes approved on 5th July 2022 at the Operations Committee meeting.

Meeting began at 7.00pm.

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

Public Forum:

No public representations received as no members of the public present.

Chair closed public forum session at 7.05pm.

OC22/121

To elect a Chair of the Operations Committee:

Cllr. Walden (Current Chair) relinquished the Chair to Cllr. Spurway (Vice-Chair) to conduct this item of business.

MS sought nominations for the position of Chair of the Committee.

SH proposed JW. JW accepted the nomination. No further nominations. Seconded by JF.

Resolved 7 votes for, 0 against and 1 abstention (JW).

JW resumed the Chair.

OC22/122

To elect a Vice-chair of the Operations Committee:

Chair sought nominations for the position of Vice-chair of the Committee.

Chair proposed ABr. ABr. accepted the nomination. No further nominations. Seconded by KB.

Resolved 7 votes for, 0 against and 1 abstention (ABr.)

OC22/123

To note those members of the committee present:

Present: Cllr. Walden (JW) (Chair), Cllr. Brooker A (ABr.) (Vice-chair), Cllrs. Burrough (KB), Farrow (JF), Holt (SH), Paice (EP), Sedgewick (AS) and Spurway (MS).

(Meeting was declared quorate)

Also present, the Town Clerk (LTC) (Paul Hayward).

No members of the public. No members of the press.

OC22/124

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

None received

OC22/125

To note members who were neither present nor had previously given their apologies, and to receive any other apologies of absence:

Chair noted that Cllr. Mynard (ongoing health matter) was absent but had not sent his apologies.

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OC22/126

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:

AS & MS both declared a personal interest in agenda item OC22/102 as Councillor members of the Guildhall Management Committee. None others declared at this point of the meeting. At the FULL Council meeting held 14/02/2022, Cllr. Farrow was afforded a dispensation* to discuss and vote upon matters pertaining to parish allotments. This dispensation applies until May 2023 (unless rescinded prior to that date) and was afforded in respect of Cllr. Farrow's disclosable pecuniary interests as set out in the Register of Members Interests. * *Localism Act 2011 (s.33)*.

OC22/127

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Operations Committee meeting held 3rd May 2022 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes:

JF put forward two minor amendments for consideration. Noted and accepted.

Approval of substantive minutes proposed by Chair, seconded by MS. Resolved unanimously.

Minutes reviewed and noted. No matters arising raised.

Clerk to arrange signing of the duly amended minutes (once corrected) to provide a true and accurate record of that meeting's business.

OC22/128

To consider any matters arising (not included within this agenda as business to be attended to) from the meeting of the 3rd May and to receive progress report from Clerk:

Clerk provided the Chair, and members of the committee, with a verbal report highlighting actions from previous meetings and updates on project/works completions and any delays being experienced in the execution of previously resolved upon proposals and recommendations.

OC22/129

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:

None proposed other than those already listed as being discussed in Part TWO session on the published agenda.

Committee business to be considered:

OC22/130

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

No business to be considered in this regard at tonight's meeting. Noted.

Chair moved to next agenda item.

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OC22/131

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

i) To consider request from neighbour that shared access be granted via Western Power Distribution to the mains supply junction box on the front elevation of the Old Courthouse building. Noting that there was no proposed cost to the Council in agreeing to this request, and that the request from Western Power would prevent further disruption to traffic and pedestrians in Church Street, **it was proposed by JF, seconded by Chair, that this request be agreed to, on the condition that the applicant liaise with the Clerk to advise when there would be any potential power interruptions to the tenants at the OCH complex (if any). Resolved unanimously.**

Clerk: Please convey this decision to the applicant.

OC22/132

To consider matters pertaining to Section 106 projects ongoing:

Clerk provided an update on the Jubilee Field climbing wall project (to be funded via S106 grant contributions from EDDC) and confirmed that EDDC were preparing a Funding Agreement for the Council's approval. Clerk had been in contact with the nominated contractor and was seeking to tie them down to a future install date.

Mindful of the risk that an installation window might be missed while the Council was awaiting grant funding from EDDC, and noting the Council's non-earmarked reserves at this time, **it was proposed by Chair, seconded by EP, that the Council should commission the play provider to install the equipment into Jubilee Field and direct the RFO to continue seeking assurances from EDDC that their funding would be released in time, with the back-stop position being that the Council could meet the cost (if called upon to do so) from reserves. Resolved unanimously.**

Clerk: please note and action accordingly.

Clerk also provided a verbal report on the recent decision to pursue the delivery of an infant/accessible play park adjoining the existing one at Millwey via EDDC S106 funding. Progress noted and Clerk directed to maintain pressure on all parties to expedite delivery.

OC22/133

To consider matters pertaining Town Centre development and regeneration:

a) Gateway Signage (x4) at Town entrance points.

Members were still not in agreement as to a design or wording to be used, and in particular, the "tagline" that would sit beneath the town name – there being a number of differing views as to the precise wording that would encapsulate the town's history and heritage (and connection to the carpet industry) whilst recognising that other industries were bring success and economic benefit to the town. Designs had been put forward by the Clerk which were more simplistic (using other towns as examples) and members directed Clerk to liaise with the newly-appointed Council Administrator to seek design layouts which could be brought back before members for consideration. Noted. Clerk: Please liaise accordingly.

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OC22/133

To consider matters pertaining Town Centre development and regeneration:

b) Consideration of design and style for town centre replacement finger-posts and signage.

Clerk provided a brief update and confirmed that he had now heard back from the EDDC Conservation officer as to their thoughts & opinions on the design and style proposals and that the suggested “black on gold” style design would be acceptable in the town centre as would painting of bollards and other furniture to match. It was agreed that a meeting of the Signage Working Party should be convened as soon as possible to start to create a timeline for the completion of the project and location maps, site plans, design specifications, marker information and details of site owners who would need to be approached for consent. Clerk was asked to gather the members of that WP together. Noted.

OC22/134

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

i) To reflect upon the recent opening event (held 2/6/2022) and to consider future improvements and amenity provision on this site for the benefit of residents and visitors.

It was felt by all members that the QJ22 J/Field opening event went very well and was popular with visitors.

Summary of discussion:

i) That signage to the field needed to be considered and improved as a great many residents did not know how to get there, or even where it was!

Signage WP: Please take this suggestion on board when considering above (OC22/133b).

ii) That committee should consider creating a map for display in noticeboards and digitally on the website which showed all town play parks.

Clerk: Please liaise with Council Administrator to consider options.

iii) That Committee should consider obtaining quotes for the mains supply of water to the site both as potential amenity in the future for visitors (fountains etc) but also to provide access to water for the grounds maintenance teams to support future planting schemes.

Clerk: Please take this forward with SWW Business team (using Swain Close entrance as the most likely point for connecting to the existing mains supply).

iv) **It was proposed by SH, seconded by JF, that Council purchase 4 of the larger template town crest at a cost of £280 (total). Resolved unanimously.**

v) That Clerk be directed to seek a quote for the re-siting of the field gate at the Swain Close entrance.

Clerk: please action accordingly.

vi) That the committee noted that the EDDC “dowry” received upon the transfer of the land at Jubilee Field was £42159 and that this sum should be used to create a Jubilee Field earmarked reserve. **Clerk: Please action accordingly in your role as RFO.**

vii) That the committee wished to express their thanks and gratitude to Cllr. Brooker (Alfie) for the kind donation of the commemorative “Jubilee” rock and inscribed plaque which was unveiled on the 2nd June by the Mayor and now took pride of place on the Jubilee Field.

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OC 22/135

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Cemetery:

No business to be considered in this regard at tonight's meeting. Noted.
Chair moved to next agenda item.

OC22/136

To consider matters pertaining to the Town Allotments:

No business to be considered in this regard at tonight's meeting. Noted.
Chair moved to next agenda item.

OC22/137

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

No business to be considered in this regard at tonight's meeting. Noted.
Clerk was asked to bring the new Council Administrator up to speed on H&S matters as quickly as possible. Noted. Chair moved to next agenda item.

OC22/138

To consider update from Clerk on arrangements for Operation London Bridge:

Clerk confirmed that several other small items had been purchased to ensure that Council was ready to implement the protocol as and when instructed. No further action required at this time. Noted. Chair thanked the Clerk for his actions in this respect.

OC22/139

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

i) To consider proposal that an additional bench amenity be provided outside the retail shop on Millwey Rise, this amenity to be paid for by the Town Council from its annual bench budget (£5000 FY22-23) and to receive update from Clerk on recent correspondence with EDDC on the subject of street furniture and amenities.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by ABr., that the Town Council should approach EDDC to seek their consent to place a bench at this location at the Town Council's cost to provide amenity for residents and visitors to that area. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please make the necessary enquiries to EDDC in order to action this proposal.

It was further proposed by Chair, seconded by ABr., that the Town Council should purchase another five units of the same bench obtained via the Welcome Back Funding (WBF) to provide a further stock as and when bench requests were received. The value of this purchase would be under £2000. Resolved unanimously. Clerk: please action accordingly.

It was further proposed by Chair, seconded by ABr., that the Clerk be duly delegated to arrange for the purchase of a sufficient number of (brass) bench plaques for the benches already installed across the town in recent months so as to identify them as Town Council property and to highlight their purpose. Resolved unanimously. Clerk: Please action accordingly.

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OC22/139

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

ii) To consider request that one of more of the Town Council's bench assets within the town be designated as "Happy to Chat" benches – part of a nationwide scheme to promote engagement and to bolster and improve resident's mental health and reduce isolation and loneliness.

It was proposed by SH, seconded by JF, that this action was unnecessary as all town benches were designed to be shared and used by residents and visitors alike and that extra wording could complicate matters and lead to confusion and possible conflict. Resolved unanimously.

iii) To consider request from a resident that a bench amenity be provided within the Raymond's Hill ward area.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SH, that the Town Council should accede to that request and that the grass verge at the junction of Crewkerne Road and Cooks Lane would be a perfect location for such a bench amenity. Clerk to be directed to liaise with Devon CC who were believed to be the site (land) owner. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

iv) To consider proposal that an additional VAS mounting pole be sited on Trinity Hill Road to reduce speeding in that area of the parish.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by JF, that the addition of an additional pole at this location might not be that effective and that it may lead to a reduction in effectiveness elsewhere until such time as another VAS unit was purchased and that, as such, this matter should be deferred until Spring 2023 to assess the effectiveness of the current locations in reducing speed in the town, whereupon some public consultation could be undertaken to gauge opinion amongst residents. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Add to March 2023 agenda for reconsideration.

Clerk also confirmed that a replacement VAS mounting pole had been ordered from DCC to replace the one which had been (unlawfully) removed from the Chard Road location. The new pole would be sited outside the Dental Surgery building at Second Avenue. Noted.

v) To note recruitment of additional groundskeeping staff and for committee to provide direction to officers as to specific areas of concern that said staff can be tasked with improving.

SH thanked all staff for their recent efforts across the town which had been well received by residents and was making a positive difference to the general tidiness of the town's streets and green spaces. Chair asked that all Councillors respectfully refrain from giving work instructions to the groundskeeping staff unilaterally and that any such requests were conveyed to the Clerk/Council Administrator who were responsible for task/work allocation. Clerk asked that OPSCOMM consider additional vehicle equipment to allow the movement of heavy plant and machinery from the chapel to sites across the town as this would negate the need for third party contractors in the long run.

Chair asked that this matter be brought before a future meeting of the OPSCOMM for further consideration.

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OC22/140

To consider matters pertaining to environmental projects and issues within the parish:

i) To consider request from National Hedgehog Rescue Charity (sent to all UK Councils) that the Town Council set aside £150 towards the purchase of a Hedgehog Highway kit to promote hedgehog protection issues and to raise awareness of their ever-decreasing numbers. The kit would ordinarily be made available to residents free-of-charge.

It was proposed by Chair, seconded by EP, that this request be refused as unnecessary and contrary to the Council's published aim to reduce plastic use in the parish. Resolved unanimously.

ii) To receive an update from Clerk on recent developments with the tentative "Station Green Wedge" project.

Report received from Clerk on progress so far. It was agreed that, should the project proceed (and that was dependent on feasibility/scoping exercises and sourcing of funding for the project) that a Project Management Plan would be essential to maintain focus and ensure completion according to the timescales set out at that time. Noted.

iii) To note the current value of the Community Benefit Fund (Newlands PV) and to consider whether Council wishes to promote this further within the Axminster community to encourage applications for sustainable, green and environmentally-friendly projects.

It was felt that over-promotion of the fund scheme could lead to a plethora of smaller (worthy but less effective) grant applications which would whittle down the balance of the earmarked reserve fund, whereas the funds might be used for a major environmental / eco-green project in the town that had the potential to deliver meaningful and significant sustainable benefits to residents and visitors.

It was therefore proposed by Chair, seconded by JF, that the fund (reserve) should be retained as it was and not be overtly and deliberately publicised, albeit that it was still available for such grant projects if and when required, together with specific expenditure identified within the Council's budget that accorded with the scheme criteria as laid out in the initial funding agreement. Resolved unanimously.

OC22/141

To consider matters pertaining to Risk Management Assessments (standing Committee agenda item):

No business to be considered in this regard at tonight's meeting. Noted.
Chair moved to next agenda item.

OC22/142

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

Clerk sought emergency delegated authority to purchase office furniture for the administration office to provide a work-station for the new Council Administrator. Afforded by Chair under their extant delegated authority (as per Council's adopted Financial Regulations) to a value of £500.

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OC22/143

Date of next scheduled meeting of the Operations Committee:

Tuesday 5th July 2022

OC22/144

With no Part Two (Confidential) business to be considered, this agenda item was not required.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 20.20hrs.

Signed Date TBA

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