

AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OPERATIONS COMMITTEE HELD ON TUESDAY, 5th OCTOBER 2021 AT 7.00 P.M. AT AXMINSTER GUILDHALL

1. PRESENT: Cllr. Walden (Chairman), Cllr. M.D.G. Spurway (Vice-chairman) Cllr. Farrow, Cllr. A.G. Sedgewick, Cllr. C.W.C Hall, the Town Clerk and the Administrative Assistant.

Also in attendance Cllr. S.L.N. Leat

2 Members of the public, 0 representative of the press.

2. APOLOGIES: Cllr. M. Mynard and Cllr. Holt.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

CLLRS. FARROW, LEAT AND MRS. SEDGEWICK AND SPURWAY EACH DECLARED PERSONAL INTERESTS AS BEING MEMBERS OF THE AXMINSTER GUILDHALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE IN RESPECT OF ANY ITEMS RELATING TO THE GUILDHALL.

COUNCILLORS FARROW, SEDGEWICK AND WALDEN EACH DECLARED PERSONAL INTERESTS AS BEING MEMBERS OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP

CLLR. FARROW DECLARED PERSONAL INTERESTS AS BEING A MEMBER OF AXMINSTER TWINNING ASSOCIATION AND A GOVERNOR OF AXMINSTER COMMUNITY PRIMARY ACADEMY, A MEMBER OF THE LABOUR PARTY, THE NATIONAL TRUST AND THE CO-OP, A FRIEND OF FERNE ANIMAL SANCTUARY, A VOLUNTEER COLLECTOR FOR DEVON AIR AMBULANCE TRUST AND AS A JOINT TENANT OF A TOWN COUNCIL ALLOTMENT AT WOODBURY PARK ALLOTMENTS.

CLLR. LEAT DECLARED AN INTEREST AS BEING SECRETARY OF AXMINSTER DRAMA CLUB.

CLLR. SEDGEWICK DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING LIAISON COUNCILLOR ON AXE VALLEY LOCAL ACTION GROUP

CLLR. SPURWAY DECLARED AN INTEREST AS A MANAGEMENT MEMBER OF CLOAKHAM LAWN SPORTS CLUB, A MEMBER OF CO-OP FOOD GROUP, AND OF THE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS.

CLLR. WALDEN DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE GOVERNORS OF AXE VALLEY ACADEMY, AS A MEMBER OF AXMINSTER SKATEPARK STEERING GROUP, AXMINSTER TWINNING ASSOCIATION, LIAISON COUNCILLOR WITH AXMINSTER JOB CLUB, A MEMBER OF THE LABOUR PARTY, COMMUNITY UNION, NATIONAL TRUST AND AS BEING SAFEGUARDING LEAD FOR AXMINSTER YOUTH CLUB.

CLLR WALDEN PROPOSED THAT AGENDA ITEM 18a BE BROUGHT FORWARD FOR DISCUSSION. CLLR. FARROW SECONDED THE PROPOSAL AGREED.

4. HEALTH AND SAFETY AUDIT REPORT: Cllr. Sedgewick said that the recent Health and Safety Audit had highlighted five instances of major non-compliance, four relating to asbestos management and one relating to Fire Risk Assessments. There were a further 24 minor issues and nine observed deviations from good practice. Following discussions, Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Hall, proposed that Cllr. Holt, who had met the Auditor, be asked to contact the firm and commission it to put in place the required remedial measures in respect of a Fire Risk Assessment for all sites and a way forward for managing the asbestos matters. Agreed.

Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Leat, proposed that the firm be engaged to carry out a Legionella Assessment. Agreed. Cllr. Leat stressed the importance of engaging suitably qualified

professionals to undertake specialist work.

CLLR. WALDEN SECONDED BY CLLR. LEAT PROPOSED THAT STANDING ORDERS BE SUSPENDED TO ALLOW THE CHAIRMAN OF AXMINSTER GUILDHALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE TO SPEAK. AGREED.

The Chairman of Axminster Guildhall Management Committee said that some of the lesser matters mentioned in the report related to the activities of that body and she was taking appropriate remedial action where that was the case. The content of the report will be shared with the Guildhall Management Committee and the new Manager will be invited to attend the next meeting of the Health and Safety Committee which will be arranged within the next two weeks.

Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that Standing Orders be re-instated.

5. MATTERS AND ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING:

The District Council had been notified regarding the request for longer opening hours for the toilets in West Street. Dist. Cllr. Moulding had been informed regarding Council's agreement to fund the legal fees for the Skatepark land transfer arrangements. Arrangements are on-going for the commemorative bench. No progress had been made with the draft Volunteers' Policy, A date had been received for the return of the property to the tenants, the minute regarding the Minster Room had not been located and the revision of the wording of the Health and Safety Committee Terms of Reference remained outstanding.

6. PUBLIC FORUM: A member of the public made representations regarding the number of headstones at the Cemetery which had been laid flat. He felt that it would be more appropriate if they had been made safe in an upright position. Cllr. Farrow suggested that the matter be considered further once the staffing levels were up to full complement. Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Hall, proposed that a quote be obtained from a local stonemason to get an indicative cost.

7. UPDATE ON SECTION 106 PROJECTS:

- a. Raymonds Hill Play Area – Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that the draft plans, as amended by the Town Clerk, be approved and the planning consultant requested to submit them to the Planning Authority for public consultation.
- b. Skatepark – the Administrative Assistant will respond to any correspondence during the absence of the Town Clerk.
- c. Fun Trail – there was nothing to report on this matter.

8. UPDATE ON VEHICLE ACTIVATED SIGNAGE: The Town Clerk said that she had notified the relevant officer at Devon County Council that all permissions were in place but had not had a response so far and will follow this up.

9. UPDATE ON TOWN SIGNAGE: Cllrs. Walden had been unable to progress this because of pressure of work over the past month and will report as soon as possible.

10. UPDATE ON JUBILEE FIELD: the Town Council's solicitor having advised the Town Clerk that he saw no problems relating to the amended Heads of Terms, this information had been passed on to the District Council.

11. PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY:

- a. Update on FP 69 – the Town Clerk said that the Hon. Footpath Warden had had not received any response from the contractors he had contacted so far so she had sent him another possible contact.

12. TRANSFER OF PHOTOGRAPHS TO HERITAGE CENTRE: Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Sedgewick proposed that a selection of photographs found in the fireproof store be handed to the Heritage Centre. Agreed.

13. FEEDBACK TO STRATEGIC PLAN DOCUMENT: Although not something which would have long term input, it was felt useful to suggest various items which would be taken into account at the budget setting process. Outline suggestions were the water supply at North Street and at Millwey Rise, for which a figure of £7000 was suggested. Work on the gates at both North Street and Woodbury Lane. Cllr. Spurway will liaise with the office staff regarding works needed at the Cemetery, which would include any new equipment. Renewing the planters would require about £6000.

14. STREET FURNITURE - BENCHES: the bench honouring Mrs. Spiller will be placed on a suitable footing. The Town Clerk will check on progress re the licence.

15. CHRISTMAS LIGHTS: the report and quote from the contractor will be considered in Committee.

16. OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS IN LIGHT OF SHORTAGE OF OUTDOOR STAFF: Cllr. Farrow referred to an email from a member of the public regarding the Old Courthouse Garden. She said the plinths for the proposed new benches could be done after the vegetation had been cut back.

17. CEMETERY MATTERS:

- a. General Maintenance – the stone pillar by the pedestrian gate needs attention as a matter of urgency as the masonry is cracked. Arrangements for the cutting of the grass are working well.
- b. Vandalism and other Problems – a letter had been received from a member of the public expressing concerns about the adverse effect on those visiting the cemetery of the debris being tipped over garden fences from houses adjoining the top of the Cemetery. The letter had referred also to instances of items placed on graves being damaged, stolen or displaced. The handyman had reported frequent finding of golf balls and had concerns about possible injury to those who were visiting the Cemetery. He noted that there had been an increase in use of the cemetery as a dog walking area and that the dogs were not being kept on leads and owners were not clearing up after them. Cllr. Walden suggested that a notice requesting that dogs be kept on leads be put on the gate Cllrs. Walden and Hall undertook to investigate these matters further. The Town Clerk will make the local Neighbourhood Policing Team aware of the concerns.

18. MATTERS PERTAINING TO THE ALLOTMENTS:

- a. Visibility Splay at Lower Gate at Woodbury Lane – Cllr. Walden said that the hedge would be lowered as and when time permitted.
- b. Tree Matters – comparative quotes will be obtained from local tree surgeons for the work detailed in the report from the tree surveyor.
- c. Gate at North Street – representations will be made to Western Power Distribution requesting that they return to site to make good the trench they backfilled following the incident at the gate. It was suggested that the gate be moved further into the allotments to get it away from the cable area and that a contractor be employed to do the work and to check with the contractor regarding cable positions before work was commenced.
- d. Poultry Welfare Arrangements – a response had been received from the local veterinary practice seeking more detailed information regarding the Town Council's requirements. A further response is awaited following supply of the information requested.
- e. Allotment Rent Collection and Tenants' meeting – the Administrative Assistant said that the rents were beginning to come in. Some tenants were giving up which would enable those on the waiting lists to be allocated plots. Cllr. Walden reported that the two main items raised by tenants were the need for improved water supplies at North Street and Millwey and a strong sense of frustration that they were being prevented from having bonfires.
- f. Allotment Regulations – the Administrative Assistant said that these needed to be overhauled and it would be easier to start again from scratch.

- g. Allotment Rent for 2022-2023 – Cllr. Farrow declared a pecuniary interest as being the partner of an allotment holder and left the chamber for this item. Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Hall, proposed that the rent for a half plot be set at £26, for a full plot £44 and for a large plot £48. Agreed. In response to a question, Cllr. Walden explained the rent was set at a level which, averaged out, would cover the running costs of the allotments, setting aside special projects.

19. MATTERS PERTAINING TO BUILDING REPAIRS:

- a. Guildhall - remedial electrical work had just been done. Major works forthcoming included the redecoration. Items highlighted in the Health and Safety Audit will be addressed.
- b. Old Courthouse – the central heating will be switched on again at a background level. The gate will revert to being locked at 16.00 hours at weekends once the clocks go back and tenants will be reminded that if they are the last people out then they will be responsible for locking them. Works on the Arts Café are progressing. A completion date of 13th December had been given and the tenants had been so advised.
- c. Cemetery Chapels – a check will be made on the Cemetery chapel roof to see whether any tiles had come off during the storm.

20. HEALTH AND SAFETY: the management of the cutting of the grass at the North Street Junction with Old North Street had been reviewed following recent incidents when cars had been damaged.

21. HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE: the rewording had yet to be done but will be done by the next meeting. A meeting for the committee will be arranged.

22. MATTERS OF URGENCY: None.

Cllr Farrow 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. Cllr. Spurway seconded the proposal. Agreed.

23 SALE OF TRACTOR: Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, proposed that an offer to purchase the smaller of the two tractors for the sum of £6000 be accepted. Agreed.

25 REMEDIAL WORKS TO CHRISTMAS LIGHTS ON MINSTER GREEN TREES: Cllr. Farrow, seconded by Cllr. Walden proposed that the quote to undertake this work for the sum of £465 be accepted. Agreed.

26 PLANTING ADVICE FOR JUBILEE FIELD: Councillors rejected a quote to give advice as arrangements had been made already with the District Council.

27 CEMETERY MATTER: following discussion of a comment received regarding what was felt to be encroachment of a stone from one grave area to an adjoining grave area, measurements had been taken and the stone in question was within the size specified by the regulations. The Administrative Assistant will seek views from various local masons.

Signed Date

