

Axminster Town Council

Minutes of the meeting of the Operations Committee held on Tuesday, 7th December 2021 at
7.00 p.m. at Axminster Guildhall

Draft minutes – yet to be approved

1.

Attendance:

a) Present: Cllr. Walden (Chair), Cllr. Spurway (Vice-Chairman), Cllr. Farrow, Cllr. Sedgewick, The Town Clerk (H. Kirkcaldie) and the Locum Deputy Clerk (P. Hayward).

1 member of the Public. No members of the press.

b) Apologies received: Cllrs. Brooker (A), Hall and Mynard. Apologies noted and approved.

c) Not present: None not otherwise listed above.

2.

Declarations of Interest:

None declared at this point of the meeting.

3.

Public Forum:

Representation from a member of the public seeking additional bicycle rack/storage facilities in the town (including capacity for tandems). General consensus support from members of committee subject to further research/enquiries on cost, design, location, installation, consents etc. Locum Deputy Clerk (LDC) was directed to make suitable enquiries and return to committee with findings. The member of the public kindly offered to share their thoughts with the committee via email to assist in this research. Chair thanked them for attending.

Member of the public left the meeting at 7.15pm.

LDC: Please note and action accordingly (noting agenda item 14 below which also covers this topic).

4.

Matters arising from minutes of the Operations Committee meeting held 2nd November 2021:

None raised.

5.

Winter resilience:

It was agreed – under Chair's delegated authority – to purchase a further 2 bulk bags of sharp sand for the purpose of replenishing the Council's (filled) sandbag store outside the Guildhall. Arrangements to be duly delegated to LDC to execute via contractor or volunteer labour.

LDC: Please note and action accordingly.

It was also noted that Cllr. Hall was no longer in a position to take up the role of Snow Warden. Chair offered to seek nominations via social media channels.

The matter is to be added to the Full Council agenda for reconsideration.

Clerk: Please note and add to agenda accordingly.

6.

Update on S106 projects:

a) Raymond's Hill Play Area.

Clerk provided an update on ongoing play park planning application. Noted.

Clerk offered to liaise with landowner to progress lease negotiations prior to installation.

Clerk: Please action accordingly.

b) Skatepark

LDC shared correspondence with members from EDDC Estates Team (via District Cllr. Sarah Jackson) which confirmed that the legal transfer of the land was currently in the hands of CLSC's legal team and that the development of the skatepark by the skatepark charity (under s106) could not proceed until the legalities on land ownership (and sub-lease) were completed. Noted.

LDC: Please liaise with CLSC trustees to progress this matter with all due expediency.

Minutes continue overleaf.

6c) Fun Trail.

No further progress to consider. Noted

d) Consideration of Section 106 funding available for public artwork at Cloakham.

RFO outlined the principles of the £23,555 of S106 funding available under this category.

Several suggestions were considered by members but no agreement reached.

Chair suggested that members of the community be asked via social media, via our website, noticeboards and via the press, as to how this ring-fenced money could be spent.

LDC was asked to contact EDDC S106 Officer to determine what conditions are attached to fund and to ascertain protocol for public consultation. It was suggested that the matter come back before Operations Committee in January for further consideration.

LDC: Please note and action accordingly. Please contact EDDC and enquire as directed.

7.

Update on Vehicle Activated Signage (VAS):

Clerk reported that neither VAS unit or the infrastructure to enable installation (poles, brackets etc) had been provided by Devon County Council (DCC) as yet. A delivery date of pre-March 2022 was now probable. LDC was asked to chase DCC for a more realistic and pressing timetable.

LDC: Please note and action accordingly.

8.

Jubilee Field:

a) Update on current position re: handover from EDDC.

LDC reported that EDDC had advised that the matter was currently with the Town Council's legal representatives, ostensibly to approve the wording of public notices that needed to be displayed onsite to publicise the proposed land disposal/transfer. Clerk offered to contact our solicitor as a matter of urgency to allow this matter to progress. LDC to take on this project upon Clerk's retirement. *Clerk: Please contact our legal representative as directed above.*

b) To consider recommended works. No further progress. Noted

9.

Matters pertaining to public rights of way:

a) Update on Footpath 69.

Clerk advised that she was awaiting quotes for maintenance work on the path but that there were likely to be some delays in light of the challenging terrain and the worsening weather conditions. Noted. LDC to liaise with Clerk to update Ops.Comm. as and when quotes received.

b) Other footpath maintenance. Nothing further to discuss.

LDC sought direction from members of Operations Committee as to the level of P3 claim for 2022-23. Proposal from Chair was that the maximum possible claim be submitted (in conjunction with the Hon. Footpath Warden) to enable the greatest amount of pending maintenance works to be completed. Resolved. *LDC: Please note and action accordingly.*

10.

To consider matters pertaining to the cemetery:

a) To consider agreement for disposal of cemetery bier and chapel bell.

It was noted that this matter was tabled on the agenda for the FULL Council meeting on 13/12 and therefore the matter was deferred to that meeting. No further action.

b) Tree and Hedge matters. In light of the commercially sensitive nature of the quotes received, the Chair proposed that this matter be considered in committee session later in the meeting. Resolved.

c) Condition of pedestrian gate masonry pier.

LDC reported that Cllr. Brooker (A) had kindly offered to assess and undertake some remedial repairs in his professional capacity as a stonemason. Noted and agreed.

Minutes continue overleaf.

10d) To consider improvements to cemetery signage.

It was thought that the proliferation of signs (on various media) on the gates detracted from both the view along the central avenue, and also from the aesthetic of the gates themselves.

The Chair proposed that the LDC be tasked with creating a draft of a new A3 sign incorporating all the content from existing signage and that this be brought back to Ops.Comm. for further consideration. Any future signs to be placed on the masonry piers either side of the gateway.

LDC: Please note and action accordingly.

e) To consider progress with future groundworks project for lower cemetery field.

LDC outlined previous discussions with groundworks contractors as to the future use/repurposing of the lower cemetery field. LDC was directed to gather together a briefing report for committee members to assess the possible uses, together with the potential re-purposing of the redundant "bonfire" field as part of the cemetery facility. Members asked that access to Z section, parking amenity, splay improvements and possible eco-habitat creation plans were included in any assessment/proposals. Noted.

LDC: please note and prepare a briefing report for consideration in the New Year.

LDC was also directed to make enquiries about costs of drone photography footage for the cemetery site. *LDC: Please note and action accordingly.*

11.

To consider matters pertaining to allotments:

a) Lower Gate Splay at Woodbury Park.

Chair asked Clerk to maintain pressure on DCC Highways Officer to progress and application via HATOC for double yellow lines on the highway adjacent to this gate splay.

Clerk: Please note and take forward accordingly.

b) To consider recommended works at allotment sites.

Clerk suggested that these works be considered in committee (see below) in light of the commercially confidential nature of the quotes. Proposed by Chair. Resolved.

c) To consider matters pertaining to the gate access at North Street allotment site.

LDC raised correspondence received from local residents regarding the delays in replacing the gate and posts on site. The letter indicated that volunteers were more than happy to provide the labour to undertake the new installation. Clerk counselled members AGAINST this course of action in light of the uncertainty of where service media ran through (and underneath) the gateway access. Chair noted Clerk's advice in this regard and proposed that the Town Council purchase a Cable Avoidance Tool (CAT) at a maximum cost of £750 (net) as a Council asset to survey any areas subject to potential excavation prior to any works proceeding. Seconded by Cllr. Farrow. Resolved unanimously. LDC to be delegated to arrange purchase.

LDC: Please note and arrange purchase accordingly.

In relation to the proposal to utilise the services of volunteers, it was agreed that Clerk and LDC would liaise with Town Council's insurers to ascertain the extent to which our insurance cover indemnified the Council in this regard.

Clerk/LDC: Please investigate with insurers and report back to committee as soon as possible.

d) To consider poultry and welfare arrangements.

After discussion, it was agreed that all statutory and relevant regulations relating to the keeping of livestock had been notified to the plottolders concerned by Council staff and that no further additional measures would be necessary or warranted on any of the allotment sites. Noted.

12.

To consider matters pertaining to building repairs and improvements:

a) Guildhall.

i) Proposal for external poster boards for advertising purposes.

It was proposed by Cllr. Sedgewick, seconded by Chair, that the committee supported "in principle" the erection of these poster boards (between the windows on the front elevation of the building) but that further research should be undertaken to ascertain as to whether any planning consents would be necessary. Resolved.

LDC: Liaise with Guildhall Manager to notify them of this "in principle" decision and to undertake further investigations re: planning consents for advertising in this location.

Minutes continue overleaf.

12a)ii) To consider enhanced festive/external illumination on Guildhall frontage and iii) To consider provision of power supplies to external aspect / Guildhall Car Park Chair agreed to consider both of these items at the same time as they were connected. LDC raised a comment from a member of the public about the lack of exterior lighting onto the frontage of the Guildhall. There was a range of opinions on this subject including a wish to improve the appearance of the facade at night, but also that increased use of illumination was not in keeping with Council's Climate Change goals in terms of power usage and promotion of dark skies for wildlife.

It was suggested by Chair that this matter be brought before FULL Council for their consideration and decision. In the meantime, LDC was directed to obtain some provisional quotes for lighting and electrical supply installation.

LDC: Please note and add to January 2022 FULL Council agenda. Seek quotes as directed.

It was also observed that one of the Guildhall signage letters had fallen.

LDC: Please liaise with Guildhall Manager to reinstate.

iv) To consider installation of renewable energy generation equipment and /or EV charging points at the Guildhall (car park).

After discussion, it was proposed by Chair that this subject be deferred until the New Year to allow a fuller and more detailed debate on the options, costs, practicalities etc of this project at FULL Council. Noted and agreed. *LDC: Please note and diarise accordingly.*

b) Old Courthouse (OCH)

i) To consider use of museum space for storage of chattels and to consider licence arrangements. Chair proposed that this matter be considered in committee session (below) as the subject related to an ongoing tenancy matter. Noted and resolved accordingly.

ii) To consider arrangements for ongoing maintenance of OCH garden.

Chair proposed that this matter be deferred to the next Ops. Comm. meeting in order to allow further time for quotes to be sought for the work. Resolved

LDC: Please add to next Ops. Comm. agenda.

c) Cemetery Buildings.

Cllr. Spurway spoke on this matter and asked Clerk to provide details of what had been previously quoted for in terms of repairs, maintenance and improvements to ensure that all quotes received were based on the same specification and requirements.

Clerk: Please note and circulate this information to committee members. Please add to next Ops. Comm. agenda for further consideration.

13.

To consider any health and safety matters:

a) LDC provided a verbal update on ongoing actions from the recent H&S report received and considered at FULL Council. No further action required as matters were progressing as resolved.

b) To consider Terms of Reference for H&S Sub-Comm.

The Chair proposed that this matter be deferred until the next Ops. Comm. meeting. Resolved

LDC: Please add to next Ops. Comm. agenda.

14.

To consider any matters pertaining to street furniture:

a) £10,000 available for street furniture under the Welcome Back funding from EDDC.

after discussion, it was proposed by Chair, seconded by Cllr. Farrow, that LDC be delegated to submit requests for the following street furniture (costs to include fitting/installation):

Benches (recycled material) for Jubilee Field and Town Centre installation.

Bike racks

Multi-compartment waste and recycling bins

to make full use of the funding available to the Town Council. Resolved.

LDC: Please note and liaise with EDDC accordingly.

Minutes continue overleaf.

15.

To discuss requirements for hybrid meetings:

Chair proposed that this matter be deferred until the New Year to give the LDC the opportunity to create a briefing report for members on the pro's and con's of hybrid meetings and to take into account any changes in legislation in light of ever-changing restrictions and regulations relating to CV19 compliance and meetings. Resolved.

LDC: Please note and bring forward a report for members as soon as is practicable.

16.

To consider Draft Volunteer Policy:

Cllr. Sedgewick asked that this matter be deferred until the New Year to allow her to liaise with LDC to create a suitable policy and to compare with other similar local authorities to ensure consistency of approach in this regard. It was also noted that the earlier discussion regarding North St. allotment gate issue would feed into this policy review.

Cllr. Sedgewick/LDC: Please liaise accordingly and bring back to Ops. Comm. asap.

17.

CCTV update:

Clerk deferred this matter to the LDC as they had recently met with the Council's contracted CCTV consultant. LDC provided a verbal report on progress and advised that further quote and assessment report would be coming to this committee shortly for their consideration. LDC also sought permission to approach Council's ISP to seek costs/availability of a Static IP Address to provide a further security measure against unauthorised access to Council's CCTV database and equipment. Agreed.

LDC: Please take this matter forward accordingly and bring back to Ops. Comm. when quotes and report are available.

18.

Update on operational arrangements in light of outdoor staff shortage:

LDC confirmed that all maintenance matters were in hand and that Clerk and LDC would continue to ensure all necessary works were completed under the delegated authority already afforded by Council. LDC confirmed that access arrangements to the Cemetery had been improved and that he would be communicating with partners to notify them of access arrangements in the future.

Cllr. Farrow asked that candidates for the two vacant roles be contacted and advised of why the delays in interviewing had arisen. *LDC: Please note and action accordingly.*

19.

To consider H&S Sub-Comm. Terms of Reference (ToR):

No further considerations. This matter had been covered under item 13 above.

20.

Matters of Urgency:

Three matters were raised under this agenda item.

i) That Council should replace the damaged public noticeboard located at the entrance to Poplar Mount with a similar model (to match existing installation fittings) but with the addition of inclusive LED PV lighting inside as an amenity for viewing the noticeboard in the dark.

LDC: Please investigate options and costs and bring back to Ops. Comm. for consideration and decision asap.

ii) That Council noted the recent correspondence via social media regarding the slippery condition of the Minster steps (leading from West Street) but were mindful that the land belonged to the Diocese and thus responsibility for the upkeep, repairs and maintenance of these steps fell to the PCC (Parochial Church Council) and the Town Council could not undertake any works in that regard. Cllr. Sedgewick confirmed that the PCC were aware of recent incidents and would be taking appropriate action to minimise risks to users of the steps. No further action required.

iii) That the Chair of this committee had used his delegated authority to authorise the removal and disposal of the redundant (and derelict) bus shelter on the Chard Road at a cost of £60 to the Town Council. Noted and agreed. *LDC: Please arrange for the asset value to be reduced to £0 and removed from Council's asset register.*

Minutes continue overleaf.

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 Cllr. Farrow. Resolved.

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

21.

To consider any quotations received:

i) Two quotations received for removal of brushwood pile from cemetery upper field. It was proposed by Chair, seconded by Cllr. Sedgewick that Contractor P's quote for £480 (net) be accepted. Resolved unanimously.

LDC: Please instruct Contractor P. to proceed as quoted with all possible expediency.

ii) One quotation received from Contractor G. for tree felling and works on Council's sites incl. Jubilee Field. Recommendation from Clerk was that all allotment tree works be carried out as soon as possible, that cemetery works (sections 1 and 2) be carried out, and that all proposed works in Jubilee Field also be carried out as soon as possible.

It was proposed by Cllr. Walden, seconded by Cllr. Farrow that:

- 1) All recommended works proceed as soon as possible, subject to;
- 2) The consent from EDDC to undertake tree works on their land (prior to handover), and;
- 3) That LDC seek to obtain two comparative quotes for the works as specified and that the LDC and the Chair of the Operations Committee be duly delegated to award the works contract to the contractor offering the best value, at a cost no greater than that quoted by Contractor G. resolved unanimously.

22.

To consider future maintenance tendering arrangements.

The Chair proposed that this matter be deferred to the next meeting of the Operations Committee for further debate and consideration. Resolved.

LDC: Please note and action accordingly.

23.

Allotments Matters:

LDC confirmed that all tenants were now paid up in respect of the 2021-22 tenancy fees. Noted.

24.

Old Courthouse tenancy Matters:

It was proposed by Cllr. Farrow that delegated authority be afforded to the LDC to arrange the removal of chattels currently stored "free of charge" in the Minster Room, to the space previously occupied by the Town Museum (on the floor above). Delegated authority to spend up to £200 on the basis that the contractor used could provide evidence of relevant and necessary liability and indemnity insurance cover. Once chattels had been removed, the LDC to proceed with the execution of the resolution previously approved by the Strategy and Finance Committee in respect of the re-letting of the Minster Room space to a new tenant. Seconded by Cllr. Sedgewick. Resolved.

LDC: Please note and action accordingly.

The Clerk also provided an update on recent discussions between herself, tenants and contractors engaged with the ongoing repairs to the Arts café. Report noted.

Chair asked that the matters outlined be brought back to Operations Committee at the earliest opportunity.

LDC: Please note and add to next available agenda.

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

Signed Date

Action Points

Action	By whom	By date	Notes/Min. ref.
Research Cycle rack options	LDC	Next Ops Comm 4/1/22	3
Arrange sandbag filling	LDC	ASAP	5
Add Snow warden to FULL Council agenda	Clerk	DEC/JAN	5
Contact landowner re: RH Play Area lease	Clerk	ASAP	6
Liase with EDDC re: S106 Cloakham funds	LDC	ASAP – By Jan 2022	6
Liase with DCC re: VAS	LDC	ASAP	7
Contact solicitor re: notice approval for Jubilee Field	LDC	ASAP	8
Liase with HFW re; P3 claims for 22-23	LDC	New Year	9
Liase with Cllr. Brooker re: pier repair	LDC	ASAP	10
Create draft sign for cemetery entrance.	LDC	ASAP	10
Prepare CEM groundworks report for lower CEM field	LDC	New Year	10
Liase with DCC HWO for HATOC application for Lower Gate Splay at W'Bury	Clerk	ASAP	11
Purchase CAT	LDC	ASAP	11
Liase with Zurich re: volunteer ins. Cover	Clerk/LDC	ASAP	11
Liase with GHM re: advertising boards	LDC	ASAP	12
Add GH lighting to JAN 2022 agenda	LDC	January 2022	12
Add Renewables to OPSCOMM in New Year	LDC	New Year	12
Liase with EDDC re: WBF street furniture acquisition.	LDC	ASAP	14
Prepare briefing report re: Hybrid meetings	LDC	New Year	15
Create Volunteer Pol.	AS/LDC	New Year	16
Collate CCTV quotes	LDC	ASAP	17
<i>Continued overleaf</i>			

Collate NB options and costs	LDC	ASAP	20
Remove bus shelter from asset register as directed.	LDC	ASAP	20
Liaise with Contractor P for works at CEM	LDC	ASAP	21
Seek quotes for tree works as directed.	LDC	ASAP	21
Add tendering arrangements to next Ops Comm agenda	LDC	January 2022	22
Proceed with relocation of chattels	LDC	ASAP	24
Add OCH Arts Café matter to next Ops Comm agenda	LDC	January 2022	24

DRAFT for ATC 13th December 2021