

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
DEVON
EX13 5NX

Tel. 01297 32088

Email: Clerk@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk

Axminster Town Council:

Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy & Finance Committee

MINUTES APPROVED on 2nd December 2024; Part ONE Minutes (Redacted)

Held in person on Monday 28th October 2024. Meeting started at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Farrow (JF) (Chair), Bridge (PB), Burrough (KB), Hurren (WH), Leat (SL), Osborn (RO), Paice (EP) and Walden (JW).

(Meeting was declared as quorate with 8 members present).

Also present:

Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (PH)

No members of the public in attendance.

Chair welcomed all in attendance and ran through meeting procedure and protocol.

Chair highlighted the building fire precautions and alerted those present to the fire exits.

Public Forum session.

No public representations.

No members of the committee wished to speak in public forum at this point of the meeting.

As such, Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.05pm

SF24/051

To elect a Chair of this committee to serve until May 2025.

JW proposed JF. JF accepted nomination. KB seconded. No further nominations for Chair. Resolved nem con (JF abstained).

SF24/052

To note members of committee present:

Attendance at meeting shown above.

SF24/053

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

Apologies received from:

Cllr. Bull (JB) due to a conflicting work commitment.

Cllr. Dowdeswell (MD) due to a personal matter.

Cllr. Price (JP) due to leave absence.

Cllr. Warwick (TW) due to a conflicting engagement.

Absence and reasons for absence approved by Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

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SF24/054

To note members of committee not otherwise present and to receive any other apologies for absence:

Cllrs. Brooker, Langdon and Willey were absent. Noted.

SF24/055

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:

A declaration at this point does not preclude the need for members to declare any additional interests that may arise during this meeting.

No declarations of interest put forward by members.

SF24/056

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the S&FComm. meeting held on 29th April 2024 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes:

Approval of minutes proposed by Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

Matters arising:

None raised.

SF24/057

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: None raised by committee members other than to note that item already listed on this agenda (SF24/066 (IC)).

Strategy & Finance Business to be considered:

SF24/058

To receive a report from the RFO on the progress (and timeline) for the completion and submission of the FY24-25 AGAR (Annual Return) in conjunction with the internal auditor.

Verbal report received from RFO as to forthcoming internal auditor meetings and to confirm that previous IA recommendations are being implemented within financial practice. Noted.

Continued overleaf.

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SF24/059

To note progress with the ongoing FY24-25-26 Town Council risk management & assessment review;

RFO presented a verbal report and sought member input and direction on additional / revised / enhanced risks to the Council. Noted.

Clerk to bring RMAR back to S&FComm. in December.

SF24/060

To consider a report from the RFO relating to S106 & CIL funds available for Town Council expenditure and to note any spend deadlines for such funding. Furthermore, to receive update from RFO as to progress with S106 / CIL spending projects

*It was proposed by Chair, seconded by SL, that the entire available CIL funding in the Council's reserves (£12,395.89 *) be vired into general reserves to cover the costs of the recent capital spending at The Guildhall (on the basis that it was spending on infrastructure for the entire Axminster community). Resolved unanimously.*

Clerk to report spend to EDDC as per statutory requirement at financial year end.

** This sum excludes the additional £2673.68 CIL funding received in October 2024 from EDDC.*

RFO outlined the financial position with regards to existing (and future) S106 funding and members gave direction to RFO to enter into discussions with EDDC (the local planning authority and S106 administrator) to investigate whether the recent £100,000+ S106 allocation could be used to create a play amenity on or around the Cloakham Lawns housing estate.

Proposed by Chair, seconded by KB. Resolved unanimously.

Members also expressed their concern at the potential loss of the MUGA amenity at Cloakham Lawns Sports Centre but acknowledged that the decision to move S106 funding away from this was not something they could influence or challenge due to the legal agreements in place. Noted.

SF24/061

To receive a update report from RFO/Clerk in relation to the SWR CCIF grant project taking into account the recent interventions and discussions with SWR as to potential use of funds in accordance with their CCIF project criteria; Committee to agree further/next steps.

Report received and noted. Clerk was asked to maintain discussions with SWR and report back when formal correspondence had been received.

Continued overleaf.

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SF24/062

To consider matters pertaining to budget preparation and calculation for FY25-26 and to seek members input as to possible areas of expenditure and income and to provide direction to RFO in order to allow creation of draft budget for committee & council consideration in December 2024 and January 2025.

After significant debate, RFO was given sufficient direction by members to prepare a draft financial expenditure budget for FY25-26, taking into account all preferred areas of spending and potential income streams, with this draft financial document to be presented to S&FComm. on 2/12 and then to Council on 9/12. Predictive models showing inflationary increase, plus stepped percentages, to be prepared mindful of pending HMG announcements on additional cost pressures in that financial year. Noted. *RFO: Please action accordingly.*

WH noted the recent correspondence from DCC which confirmed their inability to provide financial support to the Town Council to continue providing a DCC information / signposting service to residents. He suggested that all such enquiries were directed by ATC employees to the DCC website. Clerk advised that this was not always possible due to the nature of some enquiries, but he would liaise with the administration team to divert as much work as possible to that online resource. Noted.

SF24/063

To consider any matters considered as urgent by presiding Chair for discussion & notation only:

A letter had been received from the Environment Agency (EA) in response to Council's recent correspondence to DCC and others regarding the flooding issues at Stoney Lane. Members felt that the letter should be published (after seeking EA approval) and also forwarded to the Clerk and Chair of All Saints PC due to the recent cross-boundary flooding issues at Weycroft Bridge. Noted. *Clerk: Please action accordingly.*

SF24/064

To note the date of the next scheduled meeting of this committee; 2nd December 2024

Continued overleaf.

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SF24/065

JW 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. Chair seconded the proposal. Resolved.

Part ONE recording was stopped at this point and the meeting moved into Part TWO (Confidential) session whereupon recording was resumed.

Committee business to be considered in Part Two:

SF24/066 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to tenancy agreements between the Town Council and 3rd party commercial tenants; to bring members up-to-date on legal discussions, advice received and responses.

RFO presented report to members.

After discussion and debate, it was proposed by Chair, seconded by EP, that direction be given to the Proper Officer to take forward two tenancy matters as quickly as possible. Resolved.

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 7.55pm.

Chair thanked all committee members for their time and attendance.

Signed Date: 2nd December 2024

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