

AXBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL
DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AXBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON
MONDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER 2009 IN THE TOWN HALL, THE SQUARE, AXBRIDGE

Meeting commenced: 7.30pm

Meeting concluded: 9.52pm

Present: Councillors Mrs J Trotman (Mayor), D Bratt, Mrs K Browne, Mrs P Ham, B Hamblin, Mrs V Isaac, P Passey, Mrs E Scott and M Taylor

Apologies for absence: Councillors C Byrne, J Gall (Deputy Mayor) and J Lukins

Also in attendance: Mrs V L Brice (Town Clerk) and County Councillor Mrs Hill

77/09 Apologies for absence

Councillor Byrne - The Clerk had understood that Councillor Byrne had hoped to attend the Council meeting and, if he was unable to make it, she had asked for a further letter to support his on-going absence from council meetings.

Councillor Gall – Members noted that Councillor Gall would be working in Edinburgh for the next three months and had submitted apologies for his absence from Council, Committee and Group meetings during this time.

Councillor Matthews - had not attended four consecutive meetings, and had given no apology for absence for tonight's meeting.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the Clerk reminds Councillor Byrne of the need to support any further on-going absence in writing for the Council's consideration;
- 2) that the Council accepts the reason for apologies given by Councillor Gall for the next three month period;
- 3) that a letter be sent to Councillor Matthews to draw attention to the consequences of persistent absence over six months which could result in him ceasing to be a member of the Town Council. Apologies, with reasons, must be given to the Council before the meeting when unable to attend. The Council, at its next meeting, may need to consider approving the reason given.

78/09 Minutes of the Council Meeting – 17th August 2009

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the council meeting held on 17th August 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

79/09 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Bratt - declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the Town Hall, as Town Hall Manager.

Councillor Hamblin – declared a personal interest in the item relating to Bristol International Airport – the Airport being a member of the Axbridge Chamber of Commerce of which he was also a member (minute 81(c) refers).

Councillor Mrs Isaac - declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the Cricket Club (minute 83 refers), being involved with the club.

Councillor Taylor – declared a personal interest in the item relating to Twinning, having been a member of the Twinning Committee (minute 82(b) refers).

Councillor Mrs Trotman – declared a personal interest in the item relating to Twinning, being Chairman of the Twinning Committee (minute 82(b) refers).

80/09 Reports

A County Councillor's Report – County Councillor Mrs Scott advised that the budgets and planned expenditure were being reviewed with the Medium Term Financial Plan being considered in November 2009. Speed limits on roads classified "A" and "B" were taking place – the Town Council would be consulted on this review. A schools review was also being carried out but did not affect Axbridge. In response to questions raised, Councillor Mrs Hill understood that the Development Control Manager had planned to meet with the Council on the issue of the footpath outside of the Old Butcher's Yard development and she would seek to obtain further information on the highways response to the Bristol Airport application.

B District Councillor Report – District Councillor Mrs Scott confirmed that the planning condition appeared to be unworkable in relation to the footpath and that the Development

Control Manager did wish to meet the Council to discuss the way forward. The review of car parking management would be considered in October, when costings were known, and the way in which it was intended to manage parking would then be submitted to the Secretary of State. It was not clear whether this would be a restriction or an opportunity for car parks not owned by the principal councils ie Meadow Street Car Park. The Council may wish to contact Tom Dougall to register its interest in this matter.

C Police – Clarification would be sought on the Police Community Support Officer cover whilst PSCO Sam Haydon is unable to undertake beat duties. Attention would also be drawn to the difficulty of accessing the police station in Cheddar, which had recently been closed during usual opening hours.

D Axbridge Action Group – a meeting had taken place with representatives of Somerset County Council and the Town Council (minute 84(b) refers)

E Axbridge and District Museum Trust – The Annual General Meeting would be held on 22nd October 2009, with the Annual Custodian event on 23rd October 2009. Visitor numbers were up, but sales down.

F Chamber of Commerce – the Mayor, on behalf of the Council, thanked the Chamber of Commerce for organising the successful Showcase on 29th September 2009. A presentation would be made to the Somerset Chamber of Commerce on this event.

G Cheddar Valley Cluster Group Meeting – a workshop was taking place for those involved in the process.

H Farmers' Market – a request had been received to use the community table to hold a collection for the RAF Wings Appeal. This was a worthy cause but did not fall into the criteria for use of the stall as it would not directly benefit Axbridge residents. The details would be passed to the Somerset Farmers' Market who may wish to contact the individual directly and consider allowing a stall for National Charities and charities not based in Axbridge, at the Farmers Markets. The pageant had requested use of the table at the Farmers Market in October, and it was noted that the Town Design material may also be available by then. Members were pleased to note that owners were now removing their vehicles before the start of the Market. The November and December markets would include a Christmas Hamper draw, with the opportunity for visitors to the market to provide feedback. Traders had generally felt that it had not been so successful having two markets so close together (the additional one being as part of the Showcase)

I Pageant – a written report updated members on the organisation of the pageant. The Committee wished to attach signs advertising the pageant to the existing road signs at either entrance to the Town. It was suggested by council members that the existing brown tourist signs may be the most prominent signs to use. The Tudor Banquet arranged for 17th October had been cancelled. Details of the "sewing circle" – making costumes for the pageant - would be posted on the Town Trust notice board.

RESOLVED: that the Town Council agrees, in principle, for signs advertising the pageant to be attached to existing signs on the approaches to the Town.

J School Governor – a written report updated members on the changes to the Town Council representative.

RESOLVED: that the Council supports the changes made to the School Governor/Town Council representative and notes that Councillor Mrs Browne will be providing written reports from now on.

K Somerset Market Towns Forum – the Mayor would be attending the Network meeting on Wednesday. The Annual General Meeting would be held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Axbridge on 25th November 2009. Details would be made available nearer the time.

L Town Trust – Mr Francis Rabbitts had been appointed as the new Clerk.

M Other Representative Reports

Emergency Planning – members noted the efforts being made in relation to collecting the flu vaccine.

Harvest Home – had been very successful and had made a profit. A similar event would be planned for next year even though the Pageant is taking place.

There was nothing to report from the Somerset Association of Local Councils and Sports and Social Committee.

The meeting adjourned at 8.17pm.

There were no members of the public present.

The meeting resumed at 8.17pm

81/09 Planning and Licences Committee

a) Meetings held on 17th August and 21st September 2009

Members received the minutes of the 17th August 2009 for information. A member drew attention to the minute relating to Affordable Housing. A site meeting had been arranged with representatives of the Council on 5th October, but members raised a number of concerns. It was agreed that it would be beneficial to meet with the Community Council for Somerset prior to this meeting to raise these concerns and seek clarification on the council's involvement in this project.

RESOLVED: that a meeting of Council be arranged, with the representative from the Community Council for Somerset being invited to attend, to be held on 28th September 2009, if possible (or 30th or 1st October, if need be).

The Chairman updated members on the meeting held just before Council including an appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against Sedgemoor District Council's refusal to allow a log cabin at Reservoir View Motel and the results of, and actions following, the Audit Commission Inspection.

b) Footpath – Old Butcher's Yard Development

Members considered the recommendation from the Committee to write a strongly worded letter to Somerset Highways, copied to interested parties, explaining concern at the unacceptable situation and insisting that this matter be resolved. Members considered that a copy of this letter should be sent to the Group Manager (Development) at Sedgemoor District Council requesting a date for his visit to set out the proposals and time scale for the resolution of this problem.

RESOLVED: that a letter be sent as indicated above and that the Group Manger (Development) be asked to provide a date for the meeting.

c) Bristol International Airport Expansion

The Chairman summarised Somerset County Council's reply regarding the proposed Bristol Airport expansion, which members felt simply highlighted the consequences in terms of traffic and road safety but did not address them.

RESOLVED: that a letter be sent to Somerset County Council, copied to County Councillor Mrs Hill, to ask how the consequences would be addressed and whether funding would be directed to provide the necessary infrastructure requirements for Somerset, particularly in respect of the A38.

82/09 Administration and Finance

a) Report of Administration and Finance Advisory Group – September 2009

Members received this report - the key issues being set out below. Chairmen were requested to submit proposed budgetary items to the Chairman or Clerk by 5th October 2009.

b) Town Twinning Association – Administering Funds

The Town Twinning Association was being wound down and wished for the Town Council to consider, in principle, administering the fund for charitable purposes, for the youth of the Town. This could be achieved but certain procedures would need to be implemented to

enable the Town Council to do this – including holding separate meetings to allocate the funds.

RESOLVED: that the Town Twinning Association be recommended to approach the Parochial Charities in the first instance, as it already had charitable status, with a view to that body administering the funds – but that this matter be brought back to Council if this request is declined.

c) Insurance – Automated External Defibrillator

No further update.

d) Regular Grant Applications

Members received a list of proposed grant awards recommended by the group and noted that the Life Education Wessex had subsequently advised that they wished to apply next year, to coincide with their next visit to Axbridge C of E First School.

RESOLVED: that the following grant applications be made, leaving £50 remaining in the budget:

Organisation	Donation 2009-10
Age Concern Somerset	£50
Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance	£150
Sedgemoor Citizens Advice Bureau	£50
Victim Support Somerset	£50

e) Meadow Street Car Park – Opt to Tax

The Council considered the recommendation to opt to tax the car park, following enquiries and advice. This would enable the Council to recover all VAT incurred in purchasing and running the car park but mean that all income from the facility would be subject VAT. The same arrangement applied to the Changing Rooms.

RESOLVED: that the Council Opt to Tax Meadow Street Car Park and the Clerk complete the necessary paperwork accordingly.

f) Power of Well Being Training

The Clerk to Cheddar Parish Council had confirmed that training could be provided locally, if enough members wished to attend. The cost per member would be no more than £20. Seven members indicated a wish to attend the training session, depending on the date.

RESOLVED: that the Clerk circulate possible dates to interested members, to assist with arrangements, and that the Council authorise payment of attendance for those members wishing to attend the training session.

g) Parish Charter

Members considered the above Charter and requested a number of changes relating to responding to planning applications. In particular, it was felt that the first line of the Charter should be strengthened to state the importance of a good working relationship between the councils and that local councils should have the right to comment on planning applications (rather than simply support, make no observations or oppose) and to request the resubmission of applications which are sub-standard.

RESOLVED: that Sedgemoor District Council be advised that the Town Council recommends changes to the Charter, as summarised above.

h) Somerset Association of Local Councils – Annual Meetings

This Annual meetings were taking place on Saturday 26th September 2009. The usual SALC representatives were unable to attend and the Clerk would forward the Council's apologies to the Association.

i) Financial Monthly Report and Payment of Invoices

The detailed financial report for September 2009 including all payments is set out below. On the advice of the Chairman of the Leisure and Recreation Advisory Group, the remainder of the invoice for works to the pitches would not be paid at the present time, whilst this matter was being addressed. The Clerk referred to an invoice from Fenweb for the renewal of hosting the domain name and agreed to pay the costs for a two year period (£250 for two years, as opposed to £140 for one year).

Payments for authorisation.			
Mrs V Brice	Clerks salary (September)	834.31	S.112(2) LGA 1972
Mr D Hogarth	Furlong Manager (September)	171.74	S.112(2) LGA 1972
Post Office	Ni and Tax (September)	142.80	
Somerset County Council	Pension contribution (September)	227.04	LG Pension Scheme Regs 1997
Mr A Laken	Town Maint. Cont.	225.00	
Mr R Hembrow	Grass Cutting (August)	349.21	S.10 Open Spaces Act 1906
LTSB Commercial Finance Ltd	Printing of OYEZ (August)	49.50	
Fairlands Middle School	Photocopying and paper - July	48.90	
W C Maunders Ltd	Materials - L&R	13.39	
Mrs J Trotman	Reimbursement of Expenses	23.96	
Staples Delivery	Filing materials and ink	140.42	
Staples Delivery	Filing materials and accessories	56.30	
G B Sport and Leisure	Works to play area	315.79	
Clarke Willmott Solicitors	Tax advice - car park	2608.20	
Clarke Willmott Solicitors	Property Work - car park	7834.45	
Vodafone	Council's telephone (August)	27.91	
Age Concern Somerset	Donation 2009/10	50.00	
Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance	Donation 2009/10	150.00	
Sedgemoor Citizens Advice Bureau	Donation 2009/10	50.00	
Victim Support Somerset	Donation 2009/10	50.00	
Fen Web	Renewal of hosting domain etc	250.00	
(Changing rooms a/c)			
EDF Energy	Electricity	20.00	

	Total:	13,638.92	

RESOLVED: that the expenditure detailed above be approved.

83/09 Leisure and Recreation Advisory Group

a) Report of the Leisure and Recreation Advisory Group

Members received this report. The football club understood that the Town Council would need to arrange delivery of the Automated External Defibrillator. The clubs were still unhappy about the state of the football pitches as the grass seed had not grown in a substantial area, the cricket nets were due to be installed this week (it was not known whether the carpets had yet been purchased) and there were issues with the youth shelter, including increased litter. These matters would be discussed at the next Leisure and Recreation meeting.

b) Grounds Care Contractor

The Chairman advised that there were some serious issues regarding the work of the contractor on the upkeep of the Furlong. The contract was due for renewal in March 2010.

RESOLVED: that the Council actively seeks other contractors to tender for this contact in time for its renewal.

84/09 Highways Advisory Group

a) Report of the Highways Advisory Group – September 2009

Members received this report - the key issues being set out below.

b) Meeting between Axbridge Action Group, Somerset Highways and Axbridge Town Council

This meeting had been held on Thursday 17th September 2009. Members received an update on the key points – in particular, that the Action Group was seeking the Town Councils support for stage one of the trial which would include gateways into the Town, a pedestrian access and extension of the zone into Old Church Road and the removal of parking outside of the Co-op and the Hunting Lodge. The trial, which was intended to run for 12 months, could then, with the Town Council's support, be scored to be placed on the Local Transport Plan. Members raised some concerns over the loss of parking, the views of the Co-op in particular, how parking would be physically prevented and effect on events such as the Pageant. The Clerk would circulate the notes of the meeting to all members of Council. This matter would be discussed at the next meeting of the Highways Advisory Group, with a brief presentation from the Action Group representative, if appropriate, with the intention of making a recommendation to the next meeting of Council.

c) Site Meeting – Sedgemoor Highways

Members received an update on the issues raised at the site meeting with officers from Somerset Highways – Sedgemoor Area. This included the timing of works to the paving slabs (early 2010/2011), the yellow line review (to be advertised in November 2009) and a number of highways issues. A full report would be circulated to Council members. The post box was installed, but not yet operational. Members noted that the Chairman of the Highways Advisory Group would be unable to attend the group meeting for the next three months, following a new work contract.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Passey be co-opted onto the Highways Advisory Group to assist during this period, in particular.

d) Highways Matters

- a) Back Lane – Officers had planned to inspect this Lane after the meeting held on 18th September and would report back in due course.
- b) Land between Starr's Close and Houlgate Way – The Clerk reported receipt of a letter regarding this land – requesting the Town Council to contact the owner of the land to see if it could be tidied up and obtain any grants available to do the work. The letter was passed to Councillor Mrs Browne for attention, who would report back before the next meeting of Council.

85/09 Cemeteries, Allotments and Open Spaces Advisory Group

a) Allotment and Town Maintenance Contractor report

The Town Maintenance Contractor had worked 15 hours – the majority of which had been litter picking.

b) Memorial Safety

The Clerk advised that the memorial safety check was due. Councillors Val Isaac and Jennifer Trotman offered to carry out the checks, in conjunction with Priscilla Chard.

RESOLVED: that Councillors Val Isaac and Jennifer Trotman carry out the checks, in conjunction with Priscilla Chard.

86/09 Personnel

a) Report of the Personnel and Protocol Advisory Group – September 2009

Members received the above mentioned report – the key points being set out below.

b) Clerk's Course – Foundation Degree in Community Engagement and Governance

The report outlined the cost of the course and the repayment plan proposed by the group, with the support of the Clerk.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the Clerk be authorised to enrol on the course at a cost of £3,225 to be paid by the Town Council and be authorised to make the direct debit arrangements on line to facilitate enrolment, with a copy of the direct debit mandate to be signed by two cheque signatories for the council's records;
- 2) that the Council agree to reimburse the clerk for associated expenses (estimated to be £900 over the two years) and that funds be reallocated from the Data Project budget to meet this cost, if required
- 3) that the repayment schedule be approved which means that the Clerk would need to refund in their entirety the costs paid by the Council if leaving during the first year of the course, or within a year of completion and 50% of the costs if leaving during the second year of the course or within 2 years of completion.

c) Mayor's Banquet

Members discussed the proposal to have a separate budget to cover Mayoral Functions, in particular, the Mayor's Banquet, which provided an opportunity for the Town Council to thank invited guests. This matter was discussed and various comments made about the history and future of this event and the need to consider the organisation, cost and funding of this event in more detail.

RESOLVED: that this matter be referred back to the Personnel and Protocol Advisory Group for further consideration.

d) Town Crier's Fund

This fund had initially been established to assist with the costs of the Town Crier attending events abroad. These costs were no longer incurred and the use of the fund was discussed.

RESOLVED: that the Town Crier's fund be used for the maintenance of the Town Crier's regalia (but not its replacement – which is budgeted for elsewhere).

87/09 Green Issues/Recycling – no report.

88/09 Consultation Documents – Government consultations

Several consultations had been received – one relating to strengthening local democracy and the other four relating to Planning.

RESOLVED: that the summary received from Somerset Association of Local Councils be circulated to all members who should advise the clerk of any comments they may wish to make, so she can respond, if appropriate.

89/09 Car Park Management Group

RESOLVED: that the draft remit, as circulated with the agenda papers, be approved.

90/09 Town Hall Notice Boards

The Clerk had prepared the listed building application and Councillor Passey had provided the appropriate plans in relation to two new lockable and glazed notice boards (to replace the existing).

RESOLVED: that the application be submitted to Sedgemoor District Council.

91/09 Tree Planting

Councillor Passey, who had requested this agenda item, suggested it be deferred to the next meeting of Council, given the lateness of the hour.

92/09 Calendar of Meetings

RESOLVED: that the Calendar of Meetings 2009/10 be approved, subject to the date of the Remembrance Day Service being altered read to 14th November 2010.

93/09 General Correspondence and Diary Dates

The Council had received a list of correspondence, including diary dates. The Clerk drew attention to the invitation to the Remembrance Day Service on 8th November 2009 and to the information on digitalisation which would be included within OYEZ, with an invitation to the officers to use the community stall at a Farmers' Market to explain the change-over arrangements. The Fire Safety "Home Alone" campaign would be publicised in OYEZ and a survey on business register and employment was not deemed to be relevant to the Town Council. The Clerk also drew attention to a report received from the Chairman of Compton Bishop Parish Council on the A38 crossroads, which would be referred to the Highways Advisory Group for consideration and recommendation to Council. A copy of this report would be emailed to members of the group.

Chairman

Dated