

AXBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL
DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AXBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON
MONDAY 19TH OCTOBER 2009 IN THE TOWN HALL, THE SQUARE, AXBRIDGE

Meeting commenced: 7.30pm

Meeting concluded: 9.40pm

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

Apologies for absence: Councillors Mrs K Browne, J Gall (Deputy Mayor) J Lukins and A Matthews

Also in attendance: Mrs V L Brice (Town Clerk), PSCO Sam Haydon

97/09 Apologies for absence

Councillor Matthews – the Clerk advised that Councillor Matthews had indicated that he wished to resign from the Council as he was now working in Leeds. He had not attended any meetings since 15th June 2009. His letter of resignation had not yet been received by the Mayor. The Clerk had sought advice on the process from Somerset Association of Local Councils and Sedgemoor District Council.

RESOLVED: that, on receipt of the letter of resignation, the Clerk be authorised to contact Sedgemoor District Council to declare the vacancy so that the process can begin.

98/09 Minutes of the Council Meeting – 21st September and 28th September 2009

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the council meetings held on 21st September and 28th September 2009 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman subject to the county councillor's report in Minute 80/09 being amended to refer to Councillor Mrs Hill (not Mrs Scott).

99/09 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Bratt - declared a personal interest in the affordable housing item (minute 102/09 refers) depending on the site to be discussed and in any matters relating to the Town Hall, as Town Hall Manager.

Councillor Mrs Isaac - declared a personal interest in any matters relating to the Cricket Club (minute 107/09 refers), being involved with the club.

100/09 Police Report

The Chairman, supported by the Council, agreed to bring this item forward on the agenda, to enable PCSO Sam Haydon to give her report, before excluding the press and public. She updated members on PCSO support in Axbridge, a recent incident involving the theft of number plates and on manning the front desk at the police station in Cheddar. She would contact Councillor Mrs Scott regarding traffic orders for cones on farmers' market days and would confirm the situation regarding a parked van.

101/09 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED: that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted which relates to items which may form part of a contract.

102/09 Confidential Item - Affordable Housing Project

The Council had received the list of answers provided by Sedgemoor District Council, in response to the various questions raised by members at the last meeting. A confidential briefing paper was circulated by representatives of Sedgemoor District Council and was discussed in detail – this referred to the site numbers allocated to land previously identified during the process. Members supported the provision of affordable housing but had some concerns relating to the main site under consideration. The funding implications and timescales were considered.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that, ideally, the Council would like to pursue the two further sites for affordable housing and wish for investigations into these sites to continue for the time being, however if a positive response is not received from the owner by the end of this week, the Council supports, in principle, the current site being pursued for affordable housing, subject to an Affordable Housing Open Day being held (as suggested by Sedgemoor District Council) and to consideration of the plans by the Council prior to submission to the Local Planning Authority.
- 2) that an Affordable Housing Open Day be held on Monday 9th November 2009 (times likely to be between 3pm and 7pm) to be arranged by Sedgemoor District Council;
- 3) that a meeting of the Planning and Licences Committee be held on Monday 16th November 2009, just prior to the Council meeting, to enable this matter to be discussed
- 4) that, as long as the final plans are available, the plans for the site be considered at the Council meeting to be held on Monday 16th November 2009; and
- 5) that, in the event that the plans are not available for consideration at the 16th November meeting, a special meeting of council be held on a later Monday, as necessary.

103/09 Open Session

RESOLVED: that open session be resumed.

104/09 Reports

A written report had been received from Axbridge Action Group, Axbridge and District Museum Trust and the Chamber of Commerce. The Police report had been taken earlier in the meeting (minute 100/09 refers). Further reports were as follows -

Cheddar Valley Cluster Group Meeting – a workshop was taking place on 28th October for those involved in the process. Councillor Hamblin would be attending. Councillor Taylor would attend the group meeting on 4th November 2009.

School Governor – the Clerk had received a letter from the Chairman of the School Governors regarding changes to the community governor system and to the school's own procedures. These changes would ensure that the council continued to have an input into the process in the event that a member of the council did not serve on the governing body.

Somerset Market Towns Forum – The Annual General Meeting would be held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Axbridge on 25th November 2009 between 9.30am and 12.30pm, followed by a tour of the Museum.

Town Trust – a joint Town Council and Town Trust meeting would be arranged shortly.

Emergency Planning – Councillor Bratt raised concern regarding care for swine flu sufferers and was assured that out of hours care was available, through an emergency number at the doctors and through NHS Direct.

Quarry Liaison Meeting – the Clerk apologised for omitting this report from the agenda papers, and would include it on the agenda of the next Council meeting. Councillor Mrs Scott was the Town Council representative but was unable to attend meetings on a Wednesday night. Councillor Taylor offered to deputise in her absence.

Carnival – the Chairman reported on the success of the carnival and referred to some lost belongings. It was understood that the carnival had not, however, made a profit.

Cultural Forum for Somerset – Councillor Hamblin had attended this meeting and updated members.

There was nothing to report from the District Councillor, Farmers Market, Pageant, Somerset Association of Local Councils and Sports and Social Committee. No report was forthcoming from the County Councillor.

The meeting adjourned at 8.30pm.

There were no members of the public present.

The meeting resumed at 8.30 pm

105/09 Planning and Licences Committee

a) Meetings held on 21st September and 12th October 2009

Members received the above minutes for information. Several councillors would be attending the site meeting on 5th November 2009 regarding the footpath, Old Church Road.

b) Town Design Statement

The workings of the Town Design Statement had been on display at the exhibition this afternoon. The draft statement was progressing.

106/09 Administration and Finance

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

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

b) Budget and Precept 2010/11

The Council considered, in detail, the draft budget, which had been prepared by the Group, following information provided by the group chairmen and members. The budget, as drafted, required a precept of £58,983.56. The Chairman identified the key sections and drew attention to specific budgetary items. It had been recently suggested that the budget for office equipment could be reduced to £250. Members proposed to increase the budget for promoting Axbridge to £1,000 to allow for the provision of a display board on the bus shelter, if appropriate. The information on display boards would be circulated to the Chamber of Commerce. It was understood that the Chamber of Commerce had written to the Council seeking financial support towards the Showcase 2010. The letter had yet to be received and members discussed the merits, and concerns, of assisting town events. It was noted that the cost of the Christmas lights was likely to increase, but not until 2011/12. It was intended that the Council place the order for the Christmas trees.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the draft budget for 2010/11 be revised by the Group to take into account the views of the Council, and any further suggestions, with a final version being submitted for approval to the next meeting of Council on 16th November 2009;
- 2) that the funding of Town events be included on the agenda of the next Personnel and Protocol Advisory Group, with any recommendations being made to Council on 16th November 2009
- 3) that the funding request from the Showcase (to be received with supporting accounts and documentation) be considered at the next meeting of Council, when agreeing the budget.

c) Standing Orders

The Clerk had updated the standing orders to take into account previous decisions of the council including the removal of the quorum for advisory groups and the inclusion of a standing order to assist the Clerk in dealing with correspondence. Minor changes had been made to the remits and the Cemetery remit had been expanded to incorporate Allotments and Open Spaces. The policies of the Council had been collated to form an appendix to the standing orders.

RESOLVED: that the revised Standing Orders be approved and a full copy be provided to members of the Council upon request (a copy to be placed on the Town Council's website)

d) County Councillor's Grant

Members considered a recommendation to apply to the County Councillor's grant for funding towards the costs of Meadow Street Car Park.

RESOLVED: that the Clerk writes to County Councillor Mrs Hill to apply for £3,000 from her grant funding accordingly.

e) Annual Report

The Council considered the Annual Report for 2008-09 as prepared by Councillor Mrs Browne.

RESOLVED: that the Annual Report 2008-09 be approved, subject to minor amendments, and be made publicly available and that a summary of this report be compiled to be distributed with OYEZ.

f) Purchase of a Computer for Clerk

Several packages for a laptop and accessories had been considered, but could only be purchased by immediate payment i.e. credit card, rather than invoicing the Council. Whilst contact with a further company, who would invoice, looked promising, it was suggested that the Clerk be authorised to pay on her credit card for reimbursement, if this proved necessary.

RESOLVED: that, if necessary to obtain a good deal to the benefit of the Council, the Clerk be authorised to pay for the computer and necessary accessories on her credit card, in liaison with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Group Chairman, for reimbursement at the next meeting (sum of up to £750 as previously agreed).

g) Town Hall Grant

The Town Council, at its meeting on 15th June 2009, had approved the award of the grant to the Town Trust in the sum of £3,640. The first half of the payment had been made at that time, with the second instalment becoming payable in October 2009, following the receipt of the second half of the precept.

RESOLVED: that the remainder of the grant, in the sum of £1,820 be paid accordingly.

h) Town Hall Rent

An invoice had been received for the hire of the Town Hall for 2009-10, in the sum of £1,450 – which had been agreed with the Town Trust in the hire agreement.

RESOLVED: that the invoice for the hire of the Town Hall be paid accordingly.

i) Financial Monthly Report and Payment of Invoices

The detailed financial report for October 2009 including all payments is set out below.

Payments made since last meeting for ratification			
To	For	Value	Power
Post Office	Tax, NI outstanding (after deducting o/p)	31.72	
Payments for authorisation.			
Mrs V Brice	Clerks salary (October)	1172.35	S.112(2) LGA 1972
Mr D Hogarth	Furlong Manager (October)	183.78	S.112(2) LGA 1972
Post Office	NI and Tax (October)	240.22	
Somerset County Council	Pension contribution (October)	291.95	LG Pension Scheme Regs 1997
Mr A Laken	Town Maint. Cont.	240.00	
Mr R Hembrow	Grass Cutting (September)	349.21	S.10 Open Spaces Act 1906
LTSB Commercial Finance Ltd	Printing of OYEZ (Sept)	45.00	
W C Maunders Ltd	Materials - L&R	33.74	
Sedgemoor District Council	Furlong Scavenge (April - Sept 09)	687.70	
Sedgemoor District Council	Underlease - Furlong Field	41.25	
West Country Groundcare Ltd	Grass Cutting (Mar-Jul) (2nd part of inv)	638.25	
Vodafone	Council's telephone (October)	29.49	
Axbridge Town Hall	Hire of Town Hall 2009-10	1,450.00	
Axbridge Town Trust	Grant – Town Hall (2 nd half)	1,820.00	
(Changing rooms a/c)			
BWBSL	Water supply and sewerage	183.81	
EDF Energy	Electricity	20.00	

	Total:	7,186.75	

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the expenditure detailed above be approved;
- 2) that the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Leisure and Recreation Advisory Group be authorised to pay the remainder of the invoice to West Country Groundcare Ltd subject to a percentage discount being applied; and

3) that the Clerk advise Somerset County Council that the invoice issued for £95 is incorrect, as the rent rise should take effect from March 2010. A new invoice would be requested accordingly.

At this juncture, Councillor Mrs Scott left the meeting

107/09 Leisure and Recreation Advisory Group

a) Report of the Leisure and Recreation Advisory Group

The Chairman updated members on the situation with the cricket nets, which was being progressed. A meeting would need to be held with the football clubs. The Changing Rooms Manager would be having an operation and would be unable to clean the changing rooms (and similar work) for three months. It was hoped that the Town Maintenance Contractor may be able to assist.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the next meeting of the Group be held on Monday 26th November 2009 at 7.30pm, followed by a meeting with the football clubs at 8.30pm;
- 2) that the Personnel and Protocol Advisory Group consider the implications of the absence of the Changing Room Manager (i.e. sick pay arrangements)

108/09 Highways Advisory Group

a) Report of the Highways Advisory Group – October 2009

Members received this report - the key issues being set out below. The Clerk updated members on the proposed bus stop at Cheddar Road (west bound) which was now the subject of a formal complaint to Somerset County Council. The planned works at this site had been delayed accordingly.

b) Axbridge Action Group – Streets and Parking Improvement Plan

Members were reminded of the key proposals being the creation of a pedestrian only area in front of Co-op and the Museum for a trial period, the creation of a number of traffic-calming "gateways" in the main through route for a trial period and the extension of the paving of the Square along Meadow Street towards the car-park. Council considered the recommendation of the Group, bearing in mind the Town Council's policies. It was noted that these policies were due for renewal following the purchase of the car park and changes to the bus stops.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the Axbridge Action Group first put these proposals to Axbridge Chamber of Commerce and to the Town Trust, to gain their support, at which stage the matter be included on the agenda of the Council for further consideration; and
- 2) that, in the meantime, the group reviews its highways related policies for recommendation to Council.

c) A38 Cross Junction

The Council considered the recommendation to support the proposals made by Compton Bishop Council being submitted to Somerset County Council for analysis. The proposals suggested the de-classification of Cross Lane to a "B" road, "no right turns" in the vicinity of the A38 Cross junction, improvements at Shute Shelf junction, a pedestrian refuge on the A38 and pavement improvements. Members discussed this matter.

RESOLVED: that the Council supports the submission of this report accordingly.

Councillor Byrne abstained from this vote.

109/09 Cemeteries, Allotments and Open Spaces Advisory Group

a) Allotment and Town Maintenance Contractor report

The Town Maintenance Contractor had worked his full 16 hours this month. Members asked that the contractor oil the oak case of the notice board in The Square and clear/treat weeds on the footpaths joining estates.

b) Land Availability – Additional Land for Allotments

A field next to the allotments had become available but it was understood that the land was already under offer. The intended purchasers had indicated that they may be willing to rent some of the land to the council for allotments.

RESOLVED: that the possibility of renting some of the land off the new owner, for allotments, be investigated.

110/09 Personnel

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

Members received the above mentioned report – the key points being set out below. It was emphasised that January had only been a suggestion as a possible month for any civic service but whether to hold a civic service, and when, would be at the discretion of the incoming Mayor.

b) Mayor's Banquet

The Council considered the proposals put forward by the Group. The proposal relating to an increase in the budget of £100 had been included in the budget (minute 106/09(b) refers)

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the Mayor's Banquet should be just that – the Banquet of the Mayor
- 2) that it should remain a special event in the year of the Mayor
- 3) that it should follow set guidelines – specifically that the format of the evening should be black tie and include a three course meal, the saying of Grace, a speech from the Mayor and a response on behalf of the guests.
- 4) that the guest list should be at the discretion of the Mayor but must include the Sergeant at Mace, Town Bailiff, Town Crier and their respective partners – as a thank you from the Town for their specific support during the year
- 5) that the cost of any additional guests to be invited by the Mayor should be met by the Mayor (either through the Mayor's Allowance or personally)
- 6) that the choice of the individual to say Grace should be at the discretion of the Mayor and does not have to be a member of the clergy
- 7) that these changes be implemented in time for the Mayor's Banquet during 2010/11

c) Clerk's Hours

The Clerk had worked an additional 16 hours on data management.

RESOLVED: that the Clerk be paid for the additional hours and payment of these hours, and associated costs, be approved.

111/09 Meadow Street Car Park Management Group

a) Report of the Management Group

Members received the above report for information. The Chairman had obtained further information to be considered by the Group.

b) Name of Car Park

Members considered a proposal for the name of the car park

RESOLVED: that, when the Town Council is in a position to take over the management of Meadow Street Car Park, it be renamed "Axbridge Town Car Park"

112/09 Green Issues/Recycling – the Clerk drew attention to the Sort It Plus trial information.

113/09 Consultation Documents

The Clerk reported receipt of Sedgemoor District Council Budget Consultation 2010/11 (consultation ended 16th October 2009), the redevelopment of Bridgwater Community Hospital and Information from Mendip Hills on the Hinckley C Route Corridor Door consultation study.

The meeting on 28th October 2009 on the Electoral Review consultation clashed with the Cheddar Valley Group meeting and the Clerk was asked to enquire whether this review would affect Axbridge.

114/09 Tree Planting

Members suggested that the Council could investigate the planting of specimen native trees in open spaces maintained by Sedgemoor District Council. Particular reference was made to the end of Chestnut Avenue (by the Church Wall). The hedge at Jubilee Road needed to be cut back.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Passey investigate this matter and report back in due course.

115/09 Council Drop In Sessions

The Clerk outlined the offer from Sedgemoor District Council to provide a weekly drop in session in Axbridge, to provide advice and assistance to residents. Whilst members supported this, in principle, it would be logistically difficult to achieve due to the lack of a suitably accessible venue. It was suggested that a mobile unit for the drop in sessions may be the way forward.

RESOLVED: that the Clerk responds accordingly.

116/09 General Correspondence and Diary Dates

The Council had received a list of correspondence, including diary dates. The Clerk drew attention to the Car Park Management Group meeting on 2nd November 2009 (which had been omitted from the diary sheet) and to the Power of Well Being training on 19th November (to which Councillor Bratt also wished to attend). It was noted that Councillor Mrs Scott was the main council representative on the Mendip Hills AONB Partnership Committee

Chairman

Dated