



**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AXBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2025
IN AXBRIDGE TOWN HALL**

Meeting commenced: 7.30pm

Meeting concluded: 9.25pm

Present: Councillor Page (Mayor), Ham (Deputy Mayor), Browne, Faulkner, Jordan, Robertson, Smith, Taylor, Thomas, Wells and Willis.

Also in attendance: Mrs V Brice (Town Clerk) together with Somerset Councillor Ferguson (for part of the meeting)

159.24 Apologies for absence

All members were present. The Police were unable to attend due to another commitment

160.24 Draft Minutes of the Council Meetings held on 13 January 2025

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 January 2025 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

161.24 Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest:

Councillor Browne – declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in relation to the reserved matters planning application 02/22/00021 for up to 53 dwellings on land to the south of Houlgate Way - living close to the site (minute 166.24(a) refers) and would leave the meeting should this item be discussed.

Councillor Ham – declared a personal interest in the locking of the public conveniences which was currently being undertaken by a family member (minute 175.24 refers)

Councillor Taylor – declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in relation to the reserved matters planning application 02/22/00021 for up to 53 dwellings on land to the south of Houlgate Way - living adjacent to the site (minute 166.24(a) refers) (see below for dispensation).

Councillor Willis – declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in relation to the reserved matters planning application 02/22/00021 for up to 53 dwellings on land to the south of Houlgate Way - living close to the site (minute 166.24(a) refers) and would leave the meeting should this item be discussed.

Dispensations:

Councillor Taylor - had a dispensation to speak and vote on applications relating to this site (02/22/00021 for up to 53 dwellings on land to the south of Houlgate Way) and indicated he wished to use this dispensation at this meeting (minute 166.24(a) refers).

162.24 Public Participation - none

163.24 Reports from Police and Somerset Councillors

Police: Crime statistics for January 2025 had been received and a Team poster had been produced and would be displayed on the notice board and website. They had also advised of a scam which would be highlighted on social media.

Somerset Councillors: Somerset Councillor Ferguson updated on the financial position which may see a 7.5% increase in Somerset Council's share of the Council Tax. There was also a serious shortfall in Children's and Adults Social Care. Extraordinary meetings were being held and the budget was due to be set early in March 2025. It was suggested that the Clerk could contact Somerset Council to establish which services they would definitely be providing next year.

164.24 Written Reports – Outside Bodies

Axbridge and District Museum Trust: Members received the draft minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2025.

Battscombe Quarry Liaison Meeting: Councillor Ham and Taylor had represented the Council at the last meeting and would be interested to know whether members felt any shocks from the blasting, so feedback could be provided.

165.24 Committee and Group Membership

Councillors Robertson and Smith were invited to come along to any of the committees or groups which may be of interest to them. Should they wish to join a specific group, this could be agreed at Council prior to consideration of all the memberships in May 2025.

166.24 Planning

- a. **Houlgate Way** – no update

167.24 Administration and Finance

- a. **Report of the Group**

Members received the report of the Group. The key items are set out below.

- b. **Monthly Internal Audits**

The internal monthly audits for October, November and December 2024 had taken place with no issues arising.

RESOLVED: that the monthly internal audits be noted.

- c. **Policy 14 – Cash Management**

This policy had been updated to incorporate the points within the Bank Accounts investment strategy (previously agreed) and reflecting current practices following the use of scribe. The Clerk would assist the Mayor and Deputy Mayor in accessing the new bank accounts.

RESOLVED: that Policy 14 – Cash Management, as updated, be agreed.

- d. **Appointment of Internal Auditor**

The Group recommended the Council re-appoint Mr Young – a respected local clerk with auditing experience. Mr Young had confirmed he would be available to audit the accounts for 2024/25 on the same basis as last year, which members considered reasonable.

RESOLVED: that Richard Young be appointed as the Council's Internal Auditor for the accounts 2024/25.

e. Bin Emptying Contract

After due consideration of the costs and arrangements, the Group recommended that the current supplier be retained for the next financial year. The cost of emptying a bin was noted and there would be no charge for bins on the highway. Members were happy with the service currently provided and the price was considered competitive given that the bins would be emptied at the same time as the bins on the highway.

RESOLVED: that the Council continues to contract Somerset Council to empty the bins for 2025/26 at a cost of approximately £6,084.00 per year.

f. Website update

The new website had gone live on 6 February 2025 and a compliance report had been received confirming that the website meets the current WCAG 2.2AA standards. It was now up to the Council to ensure that the website remained accessible and to carry out regular checks. Members congratulated the officers on their hard work and would arrange for a letter drop to promote the new website to all residents.

RESOLVED: that a flyer be produced and printed to promote the new website.

g. Community Table

The Museum had booked the community table on 1 March 2025.

h. Monthly Financial Report

Members received a monthly financial report for February 2025 setting out the payments for ratification and authorisation together with the receipts, direct debits and standing orders received/paid in January 2025.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the list of payment of invoices for February 2025 be ratified and approved (Appendix A)
- 2) that the Direct Debit and Standing Order payments for January 2025 and the receipts for January 2025 be noted (Appendix B)

168.24 Highways Advisory Group

a. Report of the Group

Members received a report of the group updating on various highways matters. The key items are set out below. The verges at Old Church Road had been damaged, largely by tractors. The Chairman would speak with a local farmer to consider how best to address this. There was also damage to the verge by a vehicle at the top of Cheddar Road.

The Clerk had chased up the provision of the bin on the cycleway near Towsend. The 48 hour plaques had been installed on the car park signs. A note on social media had reminded residents to cut back overgrown trees and brambles. A meeting was being arranged with the Town Trust to consider matters of joint interest.

b. Speed Indicator Devices (SID's)

The outcome of the grant application for SID's was still awaited. It was hoped that grant funding would be successful. If not, members considered funding the devices through the Community Infrastructure Fund. There had been recent and ongoing concern regarding speeding through the Town. An online speed compliance tool had shown that both average and 85th percentile speeds in High Street and West Street were within the acceptable limits of enforcement.

RESOLVED: that, if the grant application is successful, the Clerk orders the two speed indicator devices and associated equipment. If the application is unsuccessful, the speed devices and associated equipment be purchased from the Community Infrastructure Fund.

c. Somerset Bus Partnership

The group proposed donating £25 to Somerset Bus Partnership towards the cost of the decals showing the new £3 supported fare.

RESOLVED: that a donation of £25 be made to Somerset Bus Partnership accordingly.

d. Highways Improvements

The Local Community Network Highways Group would be meeting on 11 February 2025, looking at various improvements to the A38 including the Cross Lane junction and access to the Strawberry Line. The new yellow lining works would be part of the next Traffic Regulation Order.

e. Highways Matters

Potholes in Jubilee Road – whilst these had been filled in, Wessex Water were now carrying out works in this vicinity.

Chevron Sign, Bypass – the Assistant Clerk had previously reported the damaged chevron sign when turning into Axbridge from the bypass and would chase up a response as the sign was still lying on the ground.

Street lighting – The three street lights in High Street had been referred to National Grid who hoped to resolve the matter by 27 February 2025. The lighting at the top of Moorland Street would need to be done “out of hours” given the narrow street and the work was being programmed. Street light No. 4 in Houlgate Way did not work and this would be reported by officers. A light at the bottom of Moorland Street had been fixed.

Knightstone Road – the street name plate had been installed.

A371 by Crossroads Garage – Councillor Browne raised an issue with a drain/sunken road which would be a matter for Wessex Water.

Peeler's Court – there was still an issue at times with a van blocking the turning circle. It had not been possible to install lining works in this vicinity. An obstruction of the highway would be a Police matter.

Van – Knightstone Road – a van parking on the highways apparently had no tax or MOT. The Chairman would discuss this with the clerk. It may be a DLVA issue.

Layby – a site meeting had been held and the cost of cutting back brambles would be investigated. Fly tipping remained, which may include a small amount of asbestos, and this would be re-reported.

169.24 Cemeteries, Allotments and Open Spaces

a. Report of the Group

Members received a report of the Group. An allotment inspection had been arranged for 12 February 2025.

b. Cemetery Site Meeting

The group wished for the Garden of Remembrance to remain integrated within the full burial plots and had suggested a site visit to map out ideas. The Clerk had since spoken with Adams Memorials and, as a result of the discussion, a possible layout had been drawn up for consideration. A site meeting would be arranged. It was also noted that the cost of the foundation bases would need to increase due to an increase in costs. Details would be sought.

c. Memorial Bench at the Cemetery

A gentleman had previously indicated that he would like to place a memorial bench at the cemetery, which members had raised no objections too. He had now provided the design of the bench on which he would then wish to place two small memorial plaques. Members were happy to purchase the bench (the gentleman to make a donation to cover the net cost of purchase and installation) to enable the bench to be included in the council's asset register and insurance schedule. The Council would then maintain the bench (but could not commit to replacing the bench at the end of its life). Members indicated that they may not wish to allow any further memorial benches at the cemetery, as a number of benches were now in place.

RESOLVED: that the siting of the memorial bench be agreed and the Clerk order the bench accordingly.

d. Open Spaces Matters - none

170.24 Leisure and Recreation

a. Report of the Group

Members received a report of the Group updating on numerous Leisure and Recreation matters. There had been some vandalism to the goal posts which had been addressed. A longer term solution would need to be considered.

b. Play Area and Public Conveniences Logs

The logs for January 2025 had not been made available in time for the meeting.

c. Public Conveniences - Contracts

Somerset Council would be ending the cleaning contract on 31 March 2025. Discussions had taken place with possible service providers (to be discussed in confidential session – minute 175.24 refers).

d. Public Conveniences Works

A new hand-drier and handrail would be fitted shortly.

e. Furlong Discussions

The Chairman updated on discussions regarding various works to the furlong as set out in the report. The Council continued to pursue the possibility to buy or extend the lease for the furlong.

f. Recreation Field

The Chairman updated on matters relating to the recreation field as set out in the report. Various suggestions were being made for the field and, whilst in the early stages of discussion, the preference seemed to be for a relaxing family area. The Clerk would apply for planning permission for change of use from agricultural to recreational. The container should be relocated to the agreed site shortly and the cost of a gate was being investigated. The four trees had also been identified as priority one works due to large areas of decay at and around the base of the trees. A quote had been received for some initial work (which would still then require a further survey to assess the extent of the internal decay) and for felling all four trees, chipping brushwood into piles and stacking the wood in 6ft max lengths. The cost of these two quotes varied considerably. The Clerk was asked to obtain a further quote to literally fell the four trees and leave them where they fall.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the Clerk apply for a change of use for planning permission for the field; and
- 2) that the Clerk seek a quote for the felling of the four trees and be delegated to consider the quote in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and carry out the appropriate works, given their priority one status.

g. Town Maintenance Report

The Town Maintenance Contractor had not submitted his report for January 2025. This would be presented to the next meeting.

171.24 Personnel and Protocol

The Assistant Clerk understood the Council would need to pay for CiLCA course prior to attending the introductory session.

a. Draft Minutes of the Personnel and Protocol meeting held on 27 January 2025

Members received the draft minutes of the above meeting.

b. Civic Service

This would be held on Sunday 2 March 2025. Entertainment was being organised. An Order of Service would need to be prepared and the organist booked.

172.24 Strategic Planning Advisory Group

a. Report of the Group

Members received a report of the Group updating on the key priority projects. Somerset Council had responded to the Town Councils enquires wishing to take up the option to buy

the additional land at Moorland Street. They had clarified the process and would instruct their solicitors to progress this. The Chairman would confirm that the cost remained at £10,000 as previously agreed and would speak to the tenant. The Clerk would notify the Town Council's solicitor accordingly.

b. Confirmation of New Mayor's Robes

The new Mayor's Robes had been ordered. Production had started with the robes due to be delivered by the end of February 2025.

c. Green Verges

The group was looking into safer matting to see if it could be a viable option for several locations in the Town including protecting the grass verge in Old Church Road and as a potential surfacing, with dropped kerb, for the two plots of land in Chestnut Avenue. A comprehensive request for what members would like to achieve was being compiled to send to the senior highways officer, with a request for a site meeting.

173.24 General Correspondence, Consultation and Diary Dates

Members received the correspondence page and noted, in particular, the Automatic Fire Alarm Consultation (social media) and the extension of the consultation on the Boundary Review (a second consultation to follow in the summer).

Councillor Thomas advised that her employer had offered 2 free days community work to benefit communities should members wish to put forward any projects.

The diary dates are as follows

Date	Meeting	Time	Venue
COUNCIL MEETINGS			
Monday 10 February	Council	7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall
Monday 17 February	Leisure and Recreation (tbc) Cemetery, Allotments & Open Spaces	6.30pm 8.00pm	The Lamb Zoom
Monday 24 February	Personnel and Protocol Planning and Licences Highways	6.30pm 7.15pm 8.00pm	Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall
TBC	Strategic Planning	7.30pm	15 Hippisley Drive
Monday 3 March	Admin and Finance	7.30pm	By Zoom
Monday 10 March	Planning and Licences (if needed) Council	6.45pm 7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall
Monday 17 March	Annual Assembly meeting (parish meeting)	8.00pm	Axbridge Town Hall
Other events			
Tues 11 February	LCN Highways Meeting		
Thurs 20 February	LCN Climate Meeting		
Sunday 2 March 2025	Civic Service	3.00pm	St John the Baptist Church (councillors meeting at 2.40 at the Town Hall)
TBC	Town Council/Town Trust meeting		

174.24 Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED: that, in view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted which contains contractual information, it is advisable in the public interest that the press and public be temporarily excluded and they are instructed to withdraw.

175.24 Confidential Item: Public Conveniences Cleaning Contract

The Group considered the confidential report setting out details of the quotes and management of the public conveniences contract. The wallgate contract for the servicing of the hand-driers was also due for renewal.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the quote from DANFO in the sum of 9,368.23 (plus VAT) per annum be agreed subject to checking the company's credentials – the Clerk to clarify how long the quote is for and whether there is an annual inflationary rise;
- 2) that the Council continues with the current arrangements for the locking of the public conveniences with the young person being employed directly from 1 April 2025; and
- 3) that the Clerk finds out what the charges would be for a renewed contact with Wallgate and, if the price remains reasonable, that the Council renews the contract with the existing supplier (who has service history and experience with this particular equipment) for a three year period.

Chairman

Date

Agenda Item 9.8a Payments for Ratification (R) and Authorisation February 2025				
Voucher No	Date	Supplier	Description	Total (£)
336	03.02.2025	A1 Gardening and Tree Surge	Cemetery Maintenance	£240.00
337	03.02.2025	A1 Gardening and Tree Surge	allotment maintenance	£192.00
338	03.02.2025	Chris Groves Associates	Tree Works	£4,416.00
339	03.02.2025	Arien Signs Ltd	signs - recreation ground wit	£129.60
340	03.02.2025	Somerset Association of Local	Training	£30.00
341	03.02.2025	Starboard Systems Ltd	Scribe Allotments and Ceme	£1,627.20
342	03.02.2025	Dunelm (R)	Office supplies	£77.00
343	03.02.2025	Epson Store (R)	Printer Inks	£61.49
344	03.02.2025	PATA UK	Payroll - monthly service	£42.96
345-349	03.02.2025	Payroll - February 2025	Staff Salaries and assoc.pay	£4,532.14
350	04.02.2025	W.C. Maunders Ltd	Hardware for changing room	£45.00
351	05.02.2025	SLCC	Staff Training	£36.00
352	05.02.2025	Electrical World (R)	Hand dryer	£79.53
353	10.02.2025	Somerset Bus Partnership	Donation - decals	£25.00
354	06.02.2025	Heat & Plumb	Hand rail - public conv.	£83.95
			Total	£11,617.87

Notes: **Spending Powers:** The Council has the General Power of Competence
Bank Reconciliation as at 31st December 2024 £134,829.31

Agenda item 9.8b Receipts January 2025				
Voucher No:	Date	Customer	Description	Total
74	31.01.2025	Lloyds Bank - savings	Bank Interest	£31.58
73	09.01.2025	Lloyds Bank	Bank Interest	£47.77
			Total	£79.35

Agenda Item 9.8c Direct Debit & Standing Order Payments - January 2025					
Voucher No.	Supplier	Description	Net	VAT	Total
334	Water2Business	Sewerage - Moorland Street Car Park	£10.71	£0.00	£10.71
333	O2	Telephone - Assistant Clerk	£6.66	£1.33	£7.99
332	Ax Parochial Church Cou.	Office rent	£600.00	£0.00	£600.00
331	Public Works Loan Board	Loan Repayment - Town Car Park	£5,201.03	£0.00	£5,201.03
330	Zoom	Video Conferencing	£12.99	£0.00	£12.99
329	Vodafone	Telephone - Clerk contract	£14.39	£2.88	£17.27
328	BT	Broadband	£21.72	£4.34	£26.06
327	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Moorland Street Car Park	£120.00	£0.00	£120.00
326	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Town Car Park	£104.00	£0.00	£104.00
325	Npower	Electricity - Moorland St Car Park	£15.40	£0.77	£16.17
324	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Council Office	£56.00	£0.00	£56.00
323	SSE Southern Electric	Electricity - Changing Rooms	£110.69	£5.53	£116.22

322	SSE Southern Electric	Electricity – Town Car Park	£6.02	£0.30	£6.32
321	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Changing Rooms	£53.50	£0.00	£53.50
320	Water2Business	Sewerage - Town Car Park	£10.71	£0.00	£10.71
319	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Public Conveniences	£38.50	£0.00	£38.50
TOTAL					£6,397.47

DRAFT