



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AXBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 13 JANUARY 2025
IN AXBRIDGE TOWN HALL**

Meeting commenced: 7.30pm

Meeting concluded: 9.25pm

Present: Councillor Page (Mayor), Ham (Deputy Mayor), Jordan, Taylor, Wells and Willis.

Also in attendance: Mrs V Brice (Town Clerk) together with 3 members of the public, Somerset Councillor Ferguson and PCSO Chard (all for part of the meeting).

140.24 Apologies for absence

An applicant for co-option had passed on her apologies due to a former family commitment.

RESOLVED: that apologies from Councillor Browne (personal commitment) and Councillor Thomas (personal commitment) be received and approved.

141.24 Draft Minutes of the Council Meetings held on 9 December 2024

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 9 December 2024 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

142.24 Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest:

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 148.24(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 148.24(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 148.34(a) refers).

143.24 Public Participation

A representative of the Mens' Shed addressed the Council on a recent change to the sports court area. An applicant for co-option introduced himself to members.

144.24 Reports from Police and Somerset Councillors

Police: Crime statistics for November and December had been received. Some staff were currently off sick. The officer would respond to queries regarding the position of the 20mph sign in Houlgate Way and any updates in relating to the Boxing Day Hunt.

Somerset Councillors: Somerset Councillor Ferguson updated briefly on the financial situation including Children and Adult services. Somerset Council had been rated in the top 10 Unitary Authorities for recycling and toothpaste tubes could now be recycled. Plans for a Wessex Mayoral Strategic Authority were progressing. The “Call for sites” had been launched.

145.24 Written Reports – Outside Bodies

Axbridge Sports and Social Community Association: Santa in the Square had been a successful evening. A1 Gardening and Tree Surgery had done an excellent job shredding the trees. The next event would be VE Day 80 on 8 May 2025.

146.24 Co-option

The Council had received two applications for co-option from residents interested in joining the Council. There were four vacancies. The applicants were proposed, seconded and voted upon in accordance with recommended practice.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that Elliott Robertson and Nadine Smith be co-opted on to Axbridge Town Council;
- 2) that they be asked to sign their declarations of office before the next meeting of Council; and
- 3) that the application documents held by members be destroyed/returned to the Clerk to be destroyed – the successful applications to be retained by the Clerk.

At this juncture, Elliott Robertson who was present, signed his declaration of office but was unable to join the meeting due to a previous commitment.

At this juncture, Councillor Robertson left the meeting.

147.24 Committee and Group Membership

This would be included on the agenda of the next meeting to give the recently co-opted members the opportunity to join the relevant advisory groups and committees.

148.24 Planning

The Local Plan “Call for sites” had been launched giving people the opportunity to put forward possible sites for assessment.

a. Houlgate Way

An Open Day would be held on 18 January 2025.

b. Former Yeo Valley Site

Members noted that Somerset Council had approved the revisions to the scheme and that works to the site would commence at the end of January 2025.

c. The Charity Commission – Solar Panels

Members noted that the CPRE was promoting the “Sunshine Bill” which would require solar panels to be installed on all new homes.

149.24 Administration and Finance

a. Report of the Group

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

b. 3rd Quarter Report

Members received the 3rd Quarter Report setting out the receipts and payments to 31 December 2024. The Monthly Internal Audits for October, November and December 2024 were due to take place on 14 January 2024.

RESOLVED: that the 2nd Quarter Report be approved accordingly.

c. Accounts Investment Statement

Members considered the draft statement. The Chairman would consider whether it would be possible to add this statement, if agreed, to an existing policy.

RESOLVED: that the Accounts Investment Statement be approved

d. Risk Assessment – Recreation Land

Members considered an addition to the Risk Assessment and Management Document following the acquisition of the recreation land. The Leisure and Recreation Advisory Group would consider this further as plans for the field progressed. The container would now be sited at the top right of the field in front of the garages, being less visible, on higher ground and accessible from Knightstone Close.

RESOLVED: that the Risk Assessment and Management Document be revised accordingly.

e. Website update

Officers had completed the work on the draft website and had circulated to members, giving two weeks for any comments. Members were happy for the website to go live as soon as possible after this period. It was suggested that consideration be given to adding the Assistant Clerk to the membership of the Cemetery, Allotments and Open Spaces group as/when memberships were reviewed.

f. Somerset Playing Fields Association

This organisation carried out the play area safety inspection. Membership was due to renewal.

RESOLVED: that the Council renews its membership to this organisation at a cost of £15.00

g. Training Events for Officers

The Clerk wished to attend a training event on the use of Canva (which would show how to create posters, newsletters and images for social media) at a cost of £40. The Assistant Clerk would be interested in attending an allotment course focusing on health and safety matters at a similar cost. New members would need to attend the code of conduct training.

RESOLVED: that the training sessions be booked accordingly.

h. Community Table.

There were no bookings at present for use of the community table at the Farmers Market in February 2025. The Fairtrade stall had expressed concern regarding charging arrangements.

i. Monthly Financial Report

Members received a monthly financial report for January 2025 setting out the payments for ratification and authorisation (including recent invoices) together with the receipts, direct debits and standing orders received/paid in December 2024.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the list of payment of invoices for January 2025 be ratified and approved (Appendix A)
- 2) that the Direct Debit and Standing Order payments for December 2024 and the receipts for December 2024 be noted (Appendix B)

150.24 Highways Advisory Group

a. Report of the Group

Members received a report of the Chairman. There had been no recent meeting. The next meeting would be held on 27 January. Somerset Council had been unable to complete all the lining works this financial year but works carried out had included the lining at Townsend.

b. Highways Matters

Broken Glass, Townsend – the Clerk would arrange for the broken glass to be removed.

Lorries, Townsend – the Chairman on the group would contact the relevant quarry to ask that they remind their drivers to stop at the Stop Sign.

Potholes – the potholes at the top of Orchard Road were getting worse. Some potholes in Old Church Road had been identified for repair.

School Hedge – this had been trimmed.

Planter at Cheddar Road junction – this would be relocated and placed by the gateway sign.

Street lighting – officers were asked to seek an update on the two street lights in the High Street and in Moorland Street which were not working (and had previously been reported).

Overhanging hedges and brambles – a note would be placed on social media reminding residents of the legal requirement to cut back overhanging hedges etc to ensure they did not obstruct movement on a pavement or highway.

151.24 Cemeteries, Allotments and Open Spaces

a. Report of the Group

Members received a report of the Chairman. There had been no recent meeting, with the next meeting scheduled for 20 January 2025. An allotment inspection would be arranged.

b. Open Spaces Matters - none

152.24 Leisure and Recreation

a. Report of the Group

Members received a report of the Chairman. There had been no recent meeting. The next meeting would be held on 22 January 2025. Axbridge United were due for promotion to Somerset County League and, as part of their application, would need to show that the club would have the use of the facilities for the next five years. Members had no objection to this. The club intended to do some maintenance works to the field to assist with this and were looking into installing netting on posts (using a pulley system). The group would consider the possibility of re-locating the sports wall.

RESOLVED: that the Clerk provide a letter of assurance accordingly.

b. Play Area and Public Conveniences Logs

The logs for December 2024 had been made available at the meeting. The Facilities Manager would look at the fence, which had been damaged from the field side.

RESOLVED: that the Play Area and Furlong Safety Check Log and the Public Convenience for December 2024 be approved and signed by the Chairman.

c. Cleaning of the Public Conveniences

Somerset Council would be ending the cleaning contract on 31 March 2025. Initial discussions were due to take place with companies who could provide this service.

d. Additional Handrail – Public Conveniences

No further update – a suitable handrail was being sourced.

e. Recreation Field

Signage was being sourced. The Pageant Committee would liaise with the council regarding the installation of the container. Several trees in the field needed attention and the Clerk was arranging an inspection. All the additional trees would be included in the next tree survey. The chairman/officers would enquire whether planning permission would be needed for change of use from agricultural to recreational land.

f. Signage in the Changing Rooms

The signage for the changing rooms was being sourced.

g. Town Maintenance Report

The Town Maintenance Contractor had worked 19.5 hours between September and December inclusive. This had included the routine work of litter picking various sites and had also included works to the bus stop area on the bypass and the gilding of the cemetery sign.

153.24 Personnel and Protocol

a. Draft Minutes of the Personnel and Protocol meeting held on 28 October 2024

Members received the draft minutes of the above meeting.

b. New Robes for Mayor

It was proposed that new mayoral robes be made to replace the current set, which had been made in 1997. Members considered the quote from the supplier who had provided the original robes and discussed the options available (Melton was the preferred fabric). The Council considered the quote to replace the robes to be cost effective from the specialist supplier, based on a similar design and sizing to the original robes. It was likely that they could be made in time for Mayor Making. The funding of the robes was also discussed, which would be of benefit to the community in representing Axbridge on civic occasions.

RESOLVED: that the replacement Mayors Robe together with a Mayoral Bicorn be purchased from Michaels Civic Robes at a cost of £2,637.50 to be met from the Community Levy Fund.

c. Civic Service

This would be held on Sunday 2 March 2025. Officers would now formally contact the award recipients. Entertainment was being arranged.

154.24 Strategic Planning Advisory Group

a. Report of the Group

Members received a report of the Chairman. There had been no recent meeting, with the next meeting being held on 22 January 2025. The Chairman would seek further clarification on the process to take up the option to purchase the land at Moorland Street. The group would discuss producing a letter to deliver to new residents (or possibly all residents) welcoming them to Axbridge, drawing attention to the new website and giving the Town Council contact details.

155.24 Budget 2025-2026 and Precept

Members considered the previously agreed budget in light of new information on increased contract costs. On balance it was considered that there were sufficient funds within the agreed budget to meet additional costs for the coming year.

RESOLVED: that the budget for 2025/26 and the precept of £134,000 remain as previously agreed.

156.24 Axbridge Parochial Charities

The Council had been asked to consider the re-election of Richard Helps following the expiration of his term of office.

RESOLVED: that Richard Helps be re-elected as a trustee for a four-year term accordingly.

157.24 Notification of Interest – Deputy Mayor

In accordance with the process, members were asked to let the Clerk know if they were interested in the Deputy Mayor position for the Mayoral year beginning in May. She could then pass them the appropriate paperwork with the nomination of both Mayor and Deputy Mayor taking place in March 2025. The appointments would be made at the Annual Council Meeting on 12 May 2025. It was the usual process for the Deputy Mayor to become Mayor the following year, and Councillor Ham, as the current Deputy Mayor, would be happy to be appointed to this position.

158.24 General Correspondence, Consultation and Diary Dates

Members received the correspondence page and noted, in particular, the following;

Boundary Commission Review: members did not wish to comment at this stage in the process. A further consultation on the proposals was expected later in the year.

Filming in Axbridge: a company was interested in filming in Axbridge. The Clerk would arrange a meeting between the interested parties. The Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Councillor Wells hoped to attend.

Boxing Day Hunt: members noted correspondence received by the Mayor. Whilst members were sorry that a situation arose on the day, the matter was in the hands of the Police. A response would be sent accordingly.

The diary dates are as follows

Date	Meeting	Time	Venue
COUNCIL MEETINGS			
Monday 13 January	Council	7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall
Monday 20 January	Cemetery, Allotments and Open Spaces	8.00pm	Zoom
Thursday 23 January	Leisure and Recreation Strategic Planning	7.00pm onwards	15 Hippisley Drive
Monday 27 January	Personnel and Protocol Planning and Licences Highways	6.30pm 7.30pm 8.00pm	Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall
Monday 3 February	Admin and Finance	7.30pm	By Zoom
Monday 10 February	Planning and Licences (if needed) Council	6.45pm 7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall
Other events			
Tuesday 11 February	LCN Highways Working Group		
Sunday 2 March 2024	Civic Service		

Chairman

Date

Appendix A

Agenda Item 10.9a Payments for Ratification (R) and Authorisation January 2025				
Voucher	Date	Supplier	Description	Total (£)
310	07.01.2025	Somerset Association of Local Councils	Staff training	£50.00
309	07.01.2025	PATA UK	Payroll - monthly service	£37.90
308	31.12.2025	Unity Bank (R)	Bank charges	£6.00
301	13.12.2025	Safety Signs 4 Less (R)	Volunteers at work sign	£22.34
299	04.12.2025	Amazon (R)	Office supplies	£35.52
	25.12.2025	Payroll - January 2024	Staff salaries and assoc Payroll organisations	£4,532.14
		H & H Alarms	Alarm service	£104.40
		Mr Laken	Town maintenance contract	£292.50
			TOTAL	£5,080.80

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

Agenda Item 10.9b Receipts December 2024				
Voucher No.	Date	Customer	Description	Total
71	31.12.2024	Lloyds Bank - savings	Bank Interest	£32.84
72	31.12.2024	Unity Bank	Bank Interest	£170.96
70	09.12.2024	Lloyds Bank	Bank Interest	£62.39
69	04.12.2024	M J Sheppard Funeral Directors	Cemetery fees	£120.00
Total				£386.19

Agenda Item 10.9C Direct Debit & Standing Order Payments - December 2024					
Voucher No.	Supplier	Description	Net	VAT	Total
307	Zoom	Video Conferencing	£12.99	£0.00	£12.99
306	Vodafone	Telephone - Clerk contract	£14.39	£2.88	£17.27
305	BT	Broadband	£21.72	£4.34	£26.06
304	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Moorland Street Car Park	£120.00	£0.00	£120.00
303	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Town Car Park	£104.00	£0.00	£104.00
302	Npower	Electricity - Moorland St Car Park	£14.80	£0.74	£15.54
300	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Council Office	£56.00	£0.00	£56.00
298	O2	Telephone - Assistant Clerk	£6.66	£1.33	£7.99
297	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Changing Rooms	£53.50	£0.00	£53.50
296	Water2Business	Sewerage - Moorland Street Car Park	£10.71	£0.00	£10.71
295	Water2Business	Sewerage - Town Car Park	£10.71	£0.00	£10.71
294	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Public Conveniences	£38.50	£0.00	£38.50
TOTAL					£473.27