



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AXBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 9 DECEMBER 2024
IN AXBRIDGE TOWN HALL**

Meeting commenced: 7.30pm

Meeting concluded: 9.04pm

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

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

123.24 Apologies for absence

The Police were unable to attend.

RESOLVED: that apologies from Councillor Browne (ill-health) be received and approved.

124.24 Draft Minutes of the Council Meetings held on 11 November 2024

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 11 November 2024 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman subject to it being clear that Councillor Willis also declared an interest in the item on Houlgate Way and to minute 115.24 (h) showing that the payments were for November 2024.

125.24 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 130.24(c) 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 130.24(c) 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 130.24(c) refers).

126.24 Public Participation

127.24 Reports from Police and Somerset Councillors

Police: Beat surgeries were being arranged with the first one taking place on 2 January 2024. This would be re-publicised on social media nearer the time.

Somerset Councillors: Somerset Councillor Ferguson advised that the Council meeting would be held next week and would include the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. Funding of libraries may be raised as a topic with the Local Community Network meetings.

128.24 Written Reports – Outside Bodies

Axbridge Sports and Social Community Association: The Christmas trees and light were up with the Square looking very festive. Santa in the Square would take place on Saturday 21 December 2024 (not on 18 December shown on the correspondence page).

129.24 Vacancy

Councillor Jenkins had resigned from the Council and the vacancy had been declared accordingly. The Council would be free to co-opt to fill this vacancy after 24 December 2024 (if an election was not formally requested).

130.24 Planning

a. Draft Minutes of the Planning and Licences Committee – 18 November 2024

Members received the draft minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2024. The next meeting would need to include the election of Chairman/Vice-Chairman.

b. Houlgate Way

The site was progressing with the fencing moved back to reveal the open/play area space. Two barriers had fallen on cars in the recent storm.

c. Planning application

Planning application number: 02/24/00027/EF

Proposal: Demolition of conservatory and erection of a two storey extension to the rear and a single storey extension to the side

Location: 16 Parkfield Road, Axbridge, Somerset, BS26 2DD

RESOLVED: that Somerset Council be advised that Axbridge Town Council has no observations to make on the above mentioned application.

131.24 Administration and Finance

a. Report of the Group

Members received the report of the Group. Officers had inspected the sites to check for storm damage. Damage to sheds and fencing at the allotments had been brought to the attention of the tenants and minor issues at the cemetery regarding signage, fallen branches and scattered memorabilia had been addressed. The Town Maintenance Contactor would look at the cemetery gate. The consultation on hybrid meetings was discussed (minute 137.24 refers).

b. Grant – Christmas Trees and Lights

Members considered a request from the Axbridge Sports and Social Club Association for an annual donation for the cost of the small Christmas trees and replacement lights. The main tree had kindly been donated by a resident. £1900 had been included in the budget.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £1966.82 be made to the Axbridge Sports and Social Club Association for the Christmas trees and lights.

c. The Ancient and Honourable Guild of Town Criers

The Town Criers' member of the Guild was due for renewal.

RESOLVED: that the Town Crier's membership of the Guild be renewed at a cost of £35.00.

d. Remembrance Day Wreath and Donation

The Clerk had received an invoice for the cost of the Town Council wreath (£20). The Council traditionally paid £100 which included the cost of the wreath and an £80 donation. This amount had been included in the budget.

RESOLVED: that the Council pays for the wreath (£20) and donates £80 to the Royal British Legion (total cost of £100).

e. Website update

Work was progressing on the new website and a meeting had been held to finalise the sitemap, including the community side of the website. Members noted that an A-Z service directory was available which could, for example, be set up to direct someone looking to report a pothole to Somerset Council's site. A community directory could also be included on the website to direct users to local community facilities (such as the leisure centre). Members supported the inclusion of these elements.

f. Code of Conduct

The Council had adopted the Code of Conduct in 2012 but it had been more recently updated and all councils had been recommended to consider and adopt the Code.

RESOLVED: that the revised Code of Conduct be adopted accordingly.

g. Accessibility Statement

The Clerk had reviewed the accessibility statement in light of advice provided when preparing documents for the new website.

RESOLVED: that the Accessibility Statement be approved and adopted accordingly (subject to any last minute alterations/date recommended by Aubergine)

h. Privacy Policy

The Clerk had reviewed the Privacy Policy in light of advice provided when preparing documents for the new website. The format may need to be reviewed and Augberine would need to add in cookie information when the site goes live.

RESOLVED: that the Privacy Policy be approved and adopted accordingly (subject to any necessary information as recommended by Aubergine).

i. Community Table.

The Farmers Market had been cancelled due to severe weather.

j. Monthly Financial Report

Members received a monthly financial report for December 2024 setting out the payments for ratification and authorisation (including recent invoices) together with the receipts, direct debits and standing orders received/paid in November 2024. The Clerk advised that she was in contact with Somerset Association of Local Councils regarding a discount on the code of conduct training.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the list of payment of invoices be ratified and approved (Appendix A) subject to the Town Maintenance Contractor invoices for September - December 2024 being paid, on receipt (if they are in accordance with the contract).
- 2) that the Direct Debit and Standing Order payments for November 2024 and the receipts for November 2024 be noted (Appendix B)

132.24 Highways Advisory Group

a. Report of the Group

Members received a report of the group. Councillors Ham and Wells had measured the parking spaces within the Square and options for widening them. The proposals, as set out in the report, would need to be raised with the Town Trust. The signing of the disabled bay was still an issue. A member suggested that if the disabled bay was moved to the north side of The Square, the appropriate signage could be installed. Concerns regarding the state of the layby had been raised with Somerset Highways. Volunteer training continued to be pursued via the Local Community Network meetings.

b. Townsend

Correspondence had previously been received regarding the Stop sign at Townsend. It was suggested that the Council reply, having spoken with Somerset Highways, that it is not possible to replace the Stop signs with the Give Way signs and that, although many drivers are not stopping, many do and there have been less incidents. A response would be sent accordingly.

c. Highways Matters

Fallen Tree, A371 – Cheshire Homes had been advised of the fallen tree on the verge of the A371 (between Axbridge and Cheddar) and would address it within a day. Officers would also ensure the contact was aware of the damaged fence and dead trees on their land opposite the Cheddar Road junction.

School Hedge – the school was liaising with the contractor. Councillor Ham would pursue this.

“Keep Left” Townsend – this had broken off and had been reported to Somerset Highways. The potholes and white lining at the top of the slip road/A371 were still outstanding.

Knightstone Close Nameplate – this nameplate had been removed some time ago but was causing issues with deliveries. This matter had been referred to Somerset Highways. A resident had also raised this directly.

133.24 Cemeteries, Allotments and Open Spaces

a. Report of the Group

Members received the report of the Group. The key items are set out below. Members noted that a resident may wish to place a memorial bench at the cemetery.

b. Cemetery Layout

A meeting had been held to consider the layout of the Garden of Remembrance area to better manage the increasing interment of ashes. A separate area, by the car park, seemed the best way forward and various aspects were being investigated before taking this further. In the interim ashes would continue to be placed along the path.

c. Allotment – Update on works

A meeting had been held with the Quarry who were keen to spend some community time clearing plots 10A and 10B. The proposal was being taken to the Head Office for approval in January 2025. The noticeboard had been received but would be installed once the work was complete.

d. Open Spaces Matters - none

134.24 Leisure and Recreation

a. Report of the Group

Members received a report of the Group. National Grid had addressed the damaged bracket on the public conveniences. The group would further discuss various signage matters and the 48 hour plaques would be reinstalled.

b. Play Area and Public Conveniences Logs

The logs for November 2024 had been made available at the meeting. The Chairman would investigate any issue with the hand-drier in the disabled toilet, which may need replacing.

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

c. Cleaning of the Public Conveniences

A meeting had been held following Somerset Council's decision to end the cleaning contract on 31 March 2025. The Chairman was preparing a report of the options available for the Council's consideration.

d. Additional Handrail – Public Conveniences

No further update – a suitable handrail was being sourced.

e. Recreation Field

The signage had been ordered.

f. Siting of a container

The position of the container on the new recreation field had needed to be re-considered due to the proximity of pipes. It was proposed that the container be sited on the south west corner of the field – away from any houses and clear of the footpaths. It would run west-east and would be easier to access. New gates/gate access would be considered at the next Council meeting.

RESOLVED: that the new location of the container be agreed and the agreement amended slightly to reflect this.

g. Dog Bin

The Clerk had asked Somerset Council whether it would be willing to include a bin at the bottom of Knightstone Close in the bin emptying contract. A reply was awaited. It was likely this would also require the purchase of a post. The approximate cost of a bin and post would be £225, with the additional cost of emptying the bin.

h. Changing Rooms Showers

The showers were now working and another legionella test would take place. The invoice was awaited.

i. Signage in the Changing Rooms

The signage had been discussed with the footballers. Plans for internal improvements were noted.

j. Town Maintenance Report

The Town Maintenance Contractor had not been able to provide a written report in time for the meeting.

135.24 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. There had been positive feedback following the more inclusive Remembrance Day Service. Further discussion would take place with the Royal British Legion to assist with next year's arrangements.

136.24 Strategic Planning Advisory Group

a. Report of the Group

Members received a report of the Group to review the priorities. The first priority would be to pursue the purchase of the furlong, with the second priority to pursue the option of buying the remainder of the land attached to Moorland Street Car Park. Other potential projects were discussed to be looked at in more depth if the first two priorities were not possible, but value for money had to be considered.

b. Axbridge Methodist Church – future

A public meeting regarding the Methodist Church had been held on 25 November. The organisers were seeking volunteers to undertake various tasks.

137.24 General Correspondence, Consultation and Diary Dates

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

Axbridge Parochial Charities – a recent letter had been received seeking to re-elect Richad Helps to the charity for a further 4 year period. Members did not anticipate any issues with his re-election but would need to consider this at the next meeting (agenda item).

Boundary Commission Review: the reasons for the review had been explained which would result in fewer Somerset Councillors. The current boundary information was available but no proposals had been put forward within the consultation as to how best this could be achieved. Comments were welcome by 20 January 2025. This would be further discussed by the Administration and Finance Advisory Group.

Hybrid meetings: the Administration and Finance Group had considered this consultation. Members considered, at this tier of local government, it would be very expensive, complicated and require a lot of use of staff time to implement and run. The Clerk was asked to respond, if possible, not supporting hybrid meetings.

Somerset Validation Consultation – members noted this consultation which related to information needed to validate planning applications.

Somerset Bus Partnership – a meeting would be held on 12 December 2024 to update on the buses in Somerset.

Community and Health Well-being sessions – details had been forwarded to members.

The diary dates are as follows

Date	Meeting	Time	Venue
COUNCIL MEETINGS			
Monday 9 December	Personnel and Protocol Committee Council	6.45pm 7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall
Monday 6 January 2025	Admin and Finance	7.30pm	By Zoom
Monday 13 January	Planning and Licences (if needed) Council	6.45pm 7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall
Monday 20 January	Leisure and Recreation (tbc) Cemetery, Allotments and Open Spaces	6.30pm 8.00pm	The Lamb Zoom
Monday 27 January	Personnel and Protocol Planning and Licences (if needed) Highways	6.30pm 7.30pm 8.00pm	Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall
TBC	Strategic Planning	7.30pm	15 Hippisley Drive
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			
Thurs 12 December	Local Community Network	6.30pm	Mark Village Hall
Sat 21 December	Santa in the Square		

138.24 Exclusion of Press and Public

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

139.24 CONFIDENTIAL ITEM: Personnel and Protocol Committee

a. Confidential Item: Civic Award and Young Person's Award Nominees

Members considered the recommendation from the Personnel and Protocol Committee.

RESOLVED: that a Civic Award be presented to the individual shown as number 1 on the list and a Community Award be made to celebrate a local sport within Axbridge (subject to their acceptance).

Chairman

Date

Appendix A

Agenda item 9.10a Payments for Ratification (R) and Authorisation - December 2024						
Voucher Date		Supplier	Description	Net	VAT	Total
293	10.12.2024	Greenslades Grounds Maintenance	Grass cutting - Furlong	£144.00	£28.80	£172.80
292	10.12.2024	Somerset Association of Local Councils	Training - Code of Conduct x 2	£50.00	£0.00	£50.00
291	10.12.2024	Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal	Wreath and Donation	£100.00	£0.00	£100.00
286-290	23.12.2024	Staff Salaries and assoc.payroll organisations	Payroll - December 2024	£6,056.30	£0.00	£6,056.30
284	04.12.2024	PATA UK	Payroll - monthly service	£82.90	£0.00	£82.90
283	04.12.2024	Axbridge Town Hall	Town Hall Annual Hire Fee	£1,450.00	£0.00	£1,450.00
282	03.12.2024	Maw Agri	Furlong maintenance	£86.90	£17.38	£104.28
281	03.12.2024	Clarke Willmott LLP	Solicitors - land Portmeade Road Axbridge	£2,829.00	£561.80	£3,390.80
280	03.12.2024	Display Wizard Ltd	Outdoor Display Board	£600.99	£120.20	£721.19
279	02.12.2024	Axbridge Sports and Social Club Association	Donation - Axbridge Sports and Social Club Association	£1,966.82	£0.00	£1,966.82
278	02.12.2024	The Ancient and Honourable Guild of Town Criers	Annual membership	£35.00	£0.00	£35.00
277	02.12.2024	Somerset Council	Bin emptying and public conveniences cleaning contract	£5,743.36	£1,148.67	£6,892.03
276	02.12.2024	The Community Heartbeat Trust (Solutions) Ltd	Annual Support Cost DEFIB	£165.00	£33.00	£198.00
275	02.12.2024	Peter D Taylor	Computer Maintenance and Repair	£40.00	£0.00	£40.00
274	02.12.2024	D Hogarth	Furlong maintenance	£49.90	£0.00	£49.90
273	02.12.2024	Greenslades Grounds Maintenance	Grass cutting - Furlong	£144.00	£28.80	£172.80
271	29.11.2024	Post Office	Postage	£9.40	£0.00	£9.40
265	1.11.2024	Augberine (to ratify)	Website development	£899.00	£179.80	£1,078.80
			TOTAL	£20,452.57	£2,118.45	£22,571.02
NOTES		* Subject to Council Approvement				
Spending Powers:						
		The Council has the General Power of Competence				
Bank Reconciliation as at 30 November 2024						
		£155,708.02				

Agenda Item 9.10b Direct Debit and Standing Order Payments - November 2024						
Voucher No	Supplier	Description	Net	VAT	Total	
272	Zoom	Video Conferencing	£12.99	£0.00	£12.99	
270	Vodafone	Telephone - Clerk contract	£14.39	£2.88	£17.27	
269	BT	Broadband	£21.72	£4.34	£26.06	
268	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Moorland Street Car Park	£120.00	£0.00	£120.00	
267	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Town Car Park	£104.00	£0.00	£104.00	
266	Npower	Electricity - Moorland St Car Park	£13.04	£0.65	£13.69	
264	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Council Office	£56.00	£0.00	£56.00	
263	SSE Southern Electric	Electricity - Changing Rooms	£102.43	£5.12	£107.55	
262	SSE Southern Electric	Electricity - Public Conveniences	£70.53	£3.52	£74.05	
261	O2	Telephone - Assistant Clerk	£6.66	£1.33	£7.99	
259	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Changing Rooms	£53.50	£0.00	£53.50	
258	Water2Business	Sewerage - Moorland Street Car Park	£10.71	£0.00	£10.71	
257	Water2Business	Sewerage - Town Car Park	£10.71	£0.00	£10.71	
256	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Public Conveniences	£38.50	£0.00	£38.50	
		TOTAL			£653.02	

Agenda Item 9.10c Receipts - November 2024

Voucher No	Date	Customer	Description	Total
68	30.11.2024	Lloyds Bank - savings	Bank Interest	£31.93
67	28.11.2024	Lloyds Bank - savings	Bank Interest	£0.00
65	14.11.2024	Axbridge Carnival Committee	Hire of changing rooms	£20.00
64	13.11.2024	Axe Valley Men's Shed Charity	Old Station Building - Rent	£750.94
66	11.11.2024	Lloyds Bank - savings	Bank Interest	£90.25
63	05.11.2024	Somerset Council	Community Infrastructure Ley	£42,449.06
62	01.11.2024	HMRC VAT	VAT repayment	£1,224.04
			TOTAL	£44,566.22