



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AXBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN
AXBRIDGE TOWN HALL ON MONDAY 8 JANUARY 2024**

Meeting commenced: 7.30p.m.

Meeting concluded: 8.43p.m.

Present: Councillor Mitton (Mayor), Page (Deputy Mayor), Ham, Faulkner, Jenkins, Jordan, Mearns, Wells (from minute 148.23) and Willis (from minute 148.23).

Also in attendance: Mrs V Brice (Town Clerk) together with 5 members of the public

141.23 Apologies for Absence

The Police had been unable to attend - being on rest days. The Clerk had emphasised that members would welcome their attendance at meetings and wished to meet the new members of the team. Somerset Councillor Ferguson had also passed on his apologies.

RESOLVED: that apologies from Councillors Browne (personal commitment), Taylor (health and family commitment) and Thomas (work commitment) be received and approved.

142.23 Draft Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 11 December 2023

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 11 December 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

143.23 Declarations of Interest and Application for Dispensations

Declarations of Interest: none

Dispensations: no dispensations were needed for the meeting.

144.23 Public Participation

A resident spoke on behalf of Axbridge Action Group regarding the use of land at Old Station Building. This matter would be referred to the Strategic Planning Advisory Group.

145.23 Reports

ORGANISATIONS	REPORTS
Police	The Council received the crime statistics for December 2023.
Somerset Councillor Ham	Somerset Councillor Ham gave a report on the financial position of Somerset Council, the steps being taken and the timetable for budget setting. The budget consultation would end on 22 January.
Somerset Councillor Ferguson	No report.

146.23 Written Reports – Outside Bodies

Axbridge Sports and Social Community Association – Father Christmas night had been a successful night with a great community atmosphere and the Association thanked the Mayor for her part in the evening. The shredding of the trees had also gone well.

Axe Valley Men's Shed – The group had carried out a lot of work to the building and would be resuming normal activities. They had requested the use of the Farmers Market in February to promote the group.

147.23 Co-option

The Council had received two applications for co-option from local residents interested in joining the Council. There were three vacancies. The applicants were proposed, seconded and voted upon in accordance with recommended practice. An enquiry had been received from another resident who had hoped to attend the meeting but had had a family emergency.

RESOLVED:

- 1)** that Mrs Barbara Wells and Mr Richard Wills 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 application to be retained by the Clerk.

At this juncture, Mrs Wells and Mr Willis, who were both present, signed their declarations of office and joined the meeting.

148.23 Committee and Group membership

The newly coopted members would consider which committees/groups they would be interested in joining.

149.23 Planning

a) Planning and Licences Committee meeting – 11 December 2023

Members received the draft minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2023. It was understood that the building works had been delayed until March 2024.

b) Manor House, High Street

It was understood that works to the Manor House were being undertaken which may involve repainting the exterior of the house in a different colour.

RESOLVED: that the Clerk writes to the owner to ensure they are aware that planning permission would be required (grade II* listed building in a conservation area) and contacts Somerset Planning (North) to bring this to their attention.

c) St Michaels Cheshire Homes

Since the dispatch of the agenda, the Council had noted that this property had been listed on Right Move as part of a "Property Guardian" scheme. The Town Council understood, from a similar situation, that this would require an HMO licence and that it would need to comply with other standards and safety regulations to operate in this way and would raise this matter with Somerset Council.

d) Axbridge Court Nursing Home

The Clerk would ask whether there was any update/further representations on this matter and would report an issue with rats to Somerset Environmental Health.

150.23 Administration and Finance

a) Report of the Chairman

Members received the report following the meeting held on 5 January 2024. The budget and precept are further considered later in the meeting (minute 155.23 refers). The alarm was due to be serviced on 19 January and members confirmed they would wish to renew the mobile app. An insurance seminar would be held on 26 January 2024 at 1pm – should members wish to attend.

b) 3rd Quarter Report

Members received the 3rd quarter report setting out the receipts and payments from 1 April 2023 to 31 December 2023 and the bank reconciliation as of that date.

RESOLVED: that the 3rd quarter report be approved and adopted.

c) Children's Air Ambulance Service

Members had received a short presentation relating to this service and would consider whether to make a financial donation at the next meeting of the group.

d) Society of Local Council Clerks

The Council had renewed the Clerk's membership. There had been some confusion as to the membership of the Assistant Town Clerk and clarification had been sought.

e) Purchase of Attendance Book

The Clerk had not had the opportunity to look into this and would do so for the next meeting.

f) Mobile Telephone – Assistant Town Clerk

This contract was now sim only at a cost of £18.76 a month. The device was relatively old causing issues with retaining charge and downloads. One option had been obtained for an iphone at a cost of £31.48. The Clerk wished to look into this and present options to the next group meeting. Councillor Mearns offered to look at the cost of purchasing a phone outright.

g) Monthly Financial Report

Members received a monthly financial report for January 2024 setting out the payments for ratification and authorisation. She reported on the receipt of recent invoices and that the figures for PATA and the payroll related invoices would not be available until later in the week.

The financial report also included the receipts received and direct debit and standing orders payments made during December 2023. The Clerk advised that the SSE direct

debit payment of £32 had not been taken and, as the new contracts had not been uploaded to the system, larger interim payments had been taken on the assumption the Council was on a variable rate. The Clerk has raised this with the company.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the list of payment of invoices (including those recently received) be ratified and approved and that the PATA invoice and payroll payments be paid, when details are known, as long as they are as expected/in accordance with contracts; (complete list attached at Appendix A); and
- 2) that the Direct Debit and Standing Order payments for December 2023 be ratified and the receipts for December 2023 noted (Appendix A)

151.23 Highways Advisory Group

a) Report of the Highways Advisory Group – December 2023

The group had not met since the last Council meeting. The next meeting would be held on 22 January 2024. Somerset Council was seeking information regarding redundant signs as part of its decluttering policy and this would be considered by the Group.

b) Town Car Park signs

The Council had previously agreed that the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman, be delegated to arrange for the repair/works to the car park signs to be undertaken using the most cost-effective method to enable this matter to be progressed; and that the additional car park sign and two defibrillator signs be purchased. There was no further update.

c) Town Gateway Sign

At the last meeting, the Council had agreed the purchase of the gateway signage for installation at the top end of Cheddar Road and that further costings be obtained in terms of the post(s) – with contact being made with Traffic Management regarding the posts and road markings. A response had been received and this matter would be further discussed by the group.

d) Axbridge to Cross Safe Path Campaign

A business plan had been requested. This matter would be further discussed by the Group.

e) Anti Social Driving

The Chairman advised that reports of accidents should be made directly to the Police (rather than the Town Council) and reminded all that potholes (and other problems on the road) should be reported directly to Somerset Council who would then deal with the matter in the most effective way. These matters would be raised on social media. The Clerk also reminded members that Chapter 8 training may still be available. If still possible, two spaces would be booked for Graham Page and Richard Willis, as members of the Sports and Social Community Association, to attend (to be funded by that organisation).

f) Highways Matters

Bins on pavements– officers were asked to contact two residents (High Street/Square) to request that they only put the bins out on collection day

Pothole, Hippisley Drive - this would be reported.

Flooding – Wood Lane and Townsend – these continued to be an issue but had been raised with Somerset Highways

Houlgate Way bays and lights – members confirmed that these were parking bays. The Clerk would contact the developers to see when the street lighting would be reinstated.

152.23 Cemeteries, Allotments and Open Spaces Group

a) Report of the Group – December 2023

The group had not met since the last meeting. The allotment inspection would take place this week, with the next group meeting on 15 January 2024.

b) Open Spaces Matter

Fallen Tree – Crossmoor Drove – it was noted that a tree had fallen and the site (which had planning permission for a dwelling) was being cleared. This would be the responsibility of the landowner.

153.23 Leisure and Recreation

a) Report of the Chairman

The group had not met since the last meeting. The next meeting would be held on 15 January 2023. The money was awaited from the football clubs.

b) Play Area and Public Conveniences Logs

The logs were not available, but inspections were taking place with visual checks of all equipment.

c) Litter bins and Hygiene bins

The Chairman would confirm whether the hygiene bin had been installed. No further update regarding litter bins.

d) Town Maintenance Contractor

The Town Maintenance Contractor had worked 9.5 hours during November and December 2023. This time had been spent litter picking the furlong and car parks, clearing gullies and tidying up and removing rubbish from the cemetery.

154.23 Personnel and Protocol Committee

a) Report of the Chairman

The next meeting would be held on 22 January 2024.

b) Mayor's Chain

The company had collected the Mayor's Chain in order to provide a quote for the works proposed.

155.23 Draft Budget and Precept 2024/25

The Council had previously considered and approved the budget and precept with a precept of £130,000 (being a 17.12% increase) subject to a further revision of the budget and precept should the Council wish to provide or finance any services during the next financial year that are currently provided by Somerset Council. The Town Council already had responsibility for many assets within the Town.

Members considered the report of the Administration and Finance Advisory Group which had proposed that a further modest increase of £1,000 be made to the budget and precept towards the maintenance of amenity areas and verge cutting. The group also suggested that the Town Council issues a press release to explain the increase in the precept.

Members supported this proposal and suggested that the press release also shows the average increase in monetary terms (i.e. the increase/cost for a Band D property).

RESOLVED: that a further £1,000.00 be allocated to the budget and precept for 2024/25 (to be allocated towards the maintenance of amenity areas and verge cutting) and that, as a result, a precept of £131,000 (being an increase of 18.02%) be approved and a press release be issued, at the appropriate time, to explain the increase in the precept.

156.23 Notification of Interest in Deputy Mayor position for Mayoral Year beginning in May

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 2024. The appointments would be made at the Annual Council Meeting on 13 May 2024. It was the usual process for the Deputy Mayor to become Mayor the following year, and Councillor Page, as the current Deputy Mayor, would be happy to be appointed to this position.

157.23 General Correspondence and Diary Dates

Members received the correspondence page and noted the following correspondence in particular:

Changes to Recycling and Collection Days
Fostering in Somerset – Recruitment Campaign

The diary dates are set out below:

Date	Meeting	Time	Venue
Thurs 4 Jan	Admin and Finance	7.30pm	Zoom
Monday 8 Jan	Council	7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall
Mon 15 Jan	Leisure and Recreation (TBC) Cemetery, Allotments and Open Spaces	6.30pm 8.00pm	The Lamb Zoom
Monday 22 Jan	Personnel and Protocol Planning and Licences – if needed Highways	TBC (likely 6.45) TBC (likely 7.30) TBC (likely 8pm)	
Tues 16	Strategic Planning	8.00pm	15 Hippisley Drive
Monday 5 Feb			
Monday 12 Feb	Planning and Licences Council	TBC 7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall

Chairman

Date

Agenda Item 10.7 Monthly financial reports

Agenda Item 10.7a Payments for Ratification (R) and Authorisation - January 2024			
	SSE Southern Electric (R)	Electricity - Public Conveniences	£40.55 (Direct Debit - to ratify)
	SSE Southern Electric (R)	Electricity - Changing Rooms	£157.32 (Direct Debit - to ratify)
DC 23-24 018	Amazon ®	Office supplies	£26.86 (Debit Card -To ratify)
BT23-24 152	Somerset Council ®	Allotment Land Rent	£140.00 (To ratify)
BT23-24 153	Greenslades Grounds Maintenance	Grass cutting - Furlong	£86.40
BT23-24 154	Mr A Laken	Town Main Contract - Nov & Dec	142.50
BT23-24 155	Somerset Association of Local Councils	Training	£35.00
Bt23-24 156	Axbridge Town Hall	Hire of town hall for meetings	1450.00
BT23-24 157	PATA	Payroll service - January	30.60
BT23-24 158-162	Payroll - January 2024	Staff salaries and assoc. payroll costs	4341.63
		TOTAL	£6,450.86

NB : Payroll in December was 3p less than agreed due to a calculation error (should have been £6601.35)

Agenda item 10.7b Receipts - December 2023

Voucher No.	Date	Customer	Description	
85	29.12.2023	Lloyds Bank - savings	Bank Interest	£32.48
84	11.12.2023	Lloyds Bank	Bank Interest	£86.55
Total				£119.03

Agenda Item 10.7c Direct Debits and Standing Order Payments - Dec 2023

Voucher No.	Supplier	Description	Net	VAT	Total
310	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Changing Rooms	£30.50	£0.00	£30.50
309	Water2Business	Sewerage - Moorland Street Car Park	£10.22	£0.00	£10.22
308	Water2Business	Sewerage - Town Car Park	£10.22	£0.00	£10.22
307	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Public Conveniences	£54.50	£0.00	£54.50
306	SSE Southern Electric	Electricity - Changing Rooms	£30.48	£1.52	£32.00
305	SSE Southern Electric	Electricity - Public Conveniences	£0.00	£0.00	£0.00
304	SSE Southern Electric	Electricity - Town Car Park	£8.18	£0.41	£8.59
303	Npower	Electricity - Moorland St Car Park	£14.25	£0.71	£14.96
302	BT	Broadband	£18.95	£3.79	£22.74
301	Zoom	Video Conferencing	£12.99	£0.00	£12.99
300	Vodafone	Telephone - Clerk Device Plan	£12.50	£2.50	£15.00
299	Vodafone	Telephone - Clerk contract	£13.34	£2.67	£16.01
298	O2	Telephone - Assistant Clerk	£15.63	£3.13	£18.76
297	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Moorland Street Car Park	£120.00	£0.00	£120.00
296	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Town Car Park	£104.00	£0.00	£104.00
276	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Council Office	£51.00	£0.00	£51.00
Total					£521.49