



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

Meeting commenced: 7.30pm

Meeting concluded: 9.45pm

Present: Councillor Page (Mayor), Ham (from minute 52.24), Jordan, Mitton, Taylor and Wells

Also in attendance: Mrs V Brice (Town Clerk)

43.24 Apologies for absence

The Police representatives had been on other duties and unable to attend. Councillor Ham (Deputy Mayor) had given her apologies due to a personal commitment but hoped to join the meeting later (see minute 52.24)

RESOLVED: that apologies from Councillor Browne (personal commitment), Councillor Faulkner (personal commitment), Councillor Jenkins (personal commitment) and Councillor Willis (personal commitment) be received and approved.

44.24 Draft Minutes of the Council Meetings held on 20 May 2024

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 May 2024 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

45.24 Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest:

Councillor Mitton – 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 (49.24(b)) (see below for dispensation).

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 (49.24(b)) (see below for dispensation).

Dispensations:

Councillor Mitton 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 (49.24(b)).

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 (49.24(b)).

46.24 Public Participation – no members of the public were in attendance.

47.24 Reports from Police and Somerset Councillors

Police – Members had received the crime statistics for June 2024 and the Clerk would forward the Neighbourhood Police Team newsletter. The advice on calling 159 as part of campaign to stop scams would be included on the website and social media. The Police Community

Support Officer also wished to hold beat surgeries in Axbridge, which members would welcome. The Clerk would reply with venue suggestions, which could include use of the community space at the Farmers Market on occasions.

Somerset Councillors – there was no update at the present time.

48.24 Written Reports – Outside Bodies

Axbridge and District Museum Trust – Members had received the report of the meeting held on 18 June 2024 and would be engaging with local organisations.

49.24 Planning

a. Report of the Chairman of the Planning and Licences Committee

The Committee had not met since the last meeting. The next meeting was scheduled to take place on 22 July 2024.

b. Houlgate Way – update

Several matters had been raised with the developers - the 20mph sign which had still not been reinstated, traffic management and the creation of a compound. Members understood that they had permission to use the field as a compound for a 2 year period, when it would be restored to an agricultural field. The developers would be asked to damp down the site in very dry conditions to suppress the dust. The Clerk would establish when the Community Infrastructure Levy would become payable.

c. Biodiversity update

The Clerk had attending training explaining Biodiversity Net Gain and the Council's role in protecting and enhancing biodiversity in its area. A second event would focus on its practical application and the Clerk would fully update the Committee on this topic.

50.24 Administration and Finance

a. Report of the Group

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

b. 1st Quarter Report – Summary of Receipts and Payments

Members received the 1st quarter report setting out the receipts and payments from 1 April 2024 to 30 June 2024 and the bank reconciliation as of that date.

RESOLVED: that the 1st quarter report be approved and adopted.

c. External Audit

The External Auditor had acknowledged receipt of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023-24 (AGAR) but it had not yet been reviewed.

d. New Bank Accounts

In accordance with the Council's wishes, the Clerk had sent in an application to Unity Trust to set up an Instant Savings Account and a Business Current Account with Unity Trust. The

bank had responded to say that the Chairman, at least, needed to be added to the accounts. There were several elements – signatures, dual authorisation and linked contacts.

RESOLVED: that the accounts be set up to enable the officers to administer the accounts and submit and technically authorise payments (as part of the account set up) and that in practice two out of three members (Councillor Page, Ham and Taylor) authorise payments. Transfers between the unity accounts to be done by sole signatory.

e. Annual Report

Members considered the draft Annual Report for 2023-2024 highlighting the work of the Council and summarising the accounts for the year. The page border would be altered.

RESOLVED: that the Annual Report 2023-24 be approved and be made available on the website with a copy sent to Somerset Council, Cheddar Library and the Doctors Surgery. Copies would be placed in the Post Office and with a poster on the notice board to advise that hard copies were available from the Clerk.

f. Community Table

There had been no requests, as yet, to use the community table in August. In future, permission would be obtained from those booking the space to share their details with the Farmers Market Manager in case of issues on the day.

g. Monthly Financial Report

Members received a monthly financial report for July 2024 setting out the payments for ratification and authorisation (including recent invoices) together with the receipts, direct debits and standing orders received/paid in June 2024. There had been a small increase in the cost of emptying the bins.

RESOLVED:

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

51.24 Highways Advisory Group

a. Report of the Group

Members received a report of the Group. The key items are set out below. The Town Trust was looking at cycle racks. It was understood that a section of the strawberry line from the A38 to the cemetery would be temporarily closed.

b. Cold Weather Policy

The Group recommended that the policy be revised to include “The relevant contact details to be shared on the Town Council social media platforms”

RESOLVED: that the policy be approved and adopted accordingly.

c. Signage

Members received the quote setting out the cost of the various car park signage. A quote for the allotment parking sign was imminent and the number of brackets needed for the signage would be clarified. Members had already agreed to purchase small “48” plaques to replace the damaged section of the signs in Axbridge Town Car Park. Further costings would be available shortly for the Dogs on Lead signs. This was a local firm, known to the Council and the signage was necessary to address various issues.

RESOLVED: that the quote from Arien Designs Ltd in the sum of £343.13 be agreed (including the wording of the signs - subject to minor spelling changes) and that the Clerk be delegated to also order the brackets and allotment sign, subject to the cost being reasonable.

d. The Square

The Group had discussed various matters regarding The Square. Members had identified a site for the positioning of the Disabled Bay sign (on a post close to and between the residential properties known as Old Market Shop and Old Forge) and this would be passed to Somerset Highways for consideration (copied to the Town Trust). It was noted that the white lining was already fading, but that this may be an opportunity to consider the widening of the spaces in next year's Traffic Regulation Order. The enforcement of parking, perhaps in early evening, would be pursued, to help deter large vehicles parking in the Square and extending into the roadway. Members appreciated that parking over the white lines may occur due to the narrowness of the spaces but felt it would be difficult to provide a ruling about the enforcement or otherwise of parking slightly outside of bays. The Clerk was, however, asked to contact parking services to find out the options should the council feel a ticket had been unfairly issued and whether it could be cancelled even after it had been paid.

e. Speed Indicator Device

Members considered the proposed response to the questions raised by the insurance company and wished to indicate within the reply that the speed watch group was autonomous but not a legal entity. The Clerk was also asked to contact Cheddar Parish Council to establish how the council managed its SID's including the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding and insurance requirements. The Risk Assessment, provided by the group, would also need to be considered.

RESOLVED: that the Clerk respond to the insurance company and contact Cheddar Parish Council accordingly.

f. Dog Bin – Strawberry Line

The Clerk had recently contacted Somerset Council to advise that the Council was considering a request for a dog bin to be placed near the Axbridge end of the Strawberry Line. She was seeking confirmation as to whether the contractor would be prepared to empty a bin in this location, should members agree to add it to the bin emptying contract. A reply was awaited.

g. Commercial Waste Bin

A local business had asked whether it would be possible to site their commercial waste bin in Moorland Street Car Park. The owners had been advised that there were no available areas/spaces in the car park and that the Council would not be able to consider losing a

parking space. Members suggested that the owners contact the adjacent businesses to see if they had a space which could be utilised.

h. Highways Matters

Road Closure - Moorland Street: A road closure would take place on 25 July for 30 days to allow gas works to take place. The company, Wales and West Utilities, would be informing residents and anticipated maintaining access to properties and to the car park. Should a full closure be necessary it would be for the most minimal amount of time and the company would keep the Council informed. Members confirmed that they were happy with arrangements for the company to use a couple of spaces in the Furlong Car Park whilst works were taking place. A land use agreement would be drawn up by the company and payment of £75 a week made accordingly.

RESOLVED: that, as the closure is during the school holidays, the Clerk contact the school to enquire whether the school car park could be made available for residents to use, at their own risk, during this period to alleviate issues with parking in this area.

School Field – Hedge: the hedge was very overgrown and the school had been contacted accordingly. The school had also needed to use the furlong field at short notice for its annual sports day. Members indicated that charges would need be applied should this be necessary in future, and that it may be necessary to further contact the school regarding the hedge which was impacting the surrounding area.

20mph signs: the owners had cut back some of the hedge at the top of West Street to make the sign and bus stop more visible, but this would need be monitored. The Clerk would contact the owners of the hedge at the corner of Hippisley Drive/Cheddar Road to request that the hedge be cut back and regularly maintained to ensure that the 20mph sign is clearly visible.

Grass Verges – Councillors Ham and Wells would be mapping the grass verges to list who maintains which area etc

Moorland Street Car Park – the hedge in the corner space (opposite the school entrance) was very overgrown, encroaching on this space. Officers would contact both the owner/occupier and Homes in Sedgemoor to request that this be addressed. The damaged wall had been made safe but still needed repair. Given the workload of the Town Maintenance Contractor, the Clerk would speak to another individual who may be able to carry out these repairs on behalf of the Council.

52.24 Cemeteries, Allotments and Open Spaces

At this juncture, Councillor Ham joined the meeting.

a. Report of the Group

Members received the report of the Group. The key items are set out below. The group would next meet on 15 July 2024. The allotments had been advertised with some interest. It had been suggested that the plots were too big. The Chairman advised that cattle from the field above had entered one of the plots, causing some damage. The farmer had been contacted and officers had contacted National Trust regarding fencing. The gilding of the lettering on the cemetery sign would be carried out when the weather improved.

b. Remit

A minor change was suggested to the remit to work with the assistant clerk (as well as the Clerk).

RESOLVED: that the remit be amended to that show that the group works with the Clerk/Assistant Clerk in relation to the allotments register, ensuring all tenants sign an agreement and monitoring the waiting list.

c. Allotment Plots 10A and 10B

Councillor Ham was finding out how to organise a Quarry Volunteer Day and, if it was possible, the group proposed that the two plots be cleared, the car park be extended into plot 10A and plot 10B then become two smaller plots.

d. Trees at the allotments

A tenant has raised a possible issue with two trees at the back of his plot. This would be discussed further by the group and it may be appropriate to raise it with the National Trust.

e. Allotment deposits

The group proposed that the deposit charges be equivalent of one year's rent, with immediate effect (currently £25 for smaller plots and £45 for the larger plots). Deposits would need to be allocated correctly within the accounts.

RESOLVED: that the deposit charge be equivalent to one year's rent with immediate effect.

f. Open Spaces Matters

St John the Baptist Churchyard Wall – Somerset Councillor Ham advised that Somerset Council would be looking at the perimeter wall.

53.24 Leisure and Recreation

a. Report of the Group

The Council received the report of the Chairman. The key items are set out below. The play area looked great. The Clerk would enquire whether the Play Area Inspection report had been completed. Dogs on lead/clean up signs were being ordered. The Clerk would send an invoice for use of the changing rooms for the Fun Day, which had been well attended.

b. Play Area and Public Conveniences Logs

The logs had been completed but not yet received. The waste pipe had been fixed and the downpipes were being looked at.

c. Fixed Wiring – Changing Rooms and Public Conveniences

The electrical installation condition reports for both sites had been considered by the Group and quotes obtained for the works to address the points raised. The works needed to be undertaken for reason of compliance and members wished to carry out the works as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: that the quotes from Chris Norman Electrical in the total sum of £1800.00 (including VAT) be approved accordingly.

d. Town Maintenance Report

The Town Maintenance Contractor had worked 10 hours during June 2024.

54.24 Personal and Protocol

a. Draft Minutes of the Personnel and Protocol meeting held on 24 June 2024

Members received the draft minutes of the above meeting. Members had reviewed the Mayor Making procedure and hoped to include the ringing of the handbells next year. Arrangements were in hand for the carnival lunch and procession to also celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Axbridge Town Council. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor would get back in touch with the Royal British Legion to help with arrangements for the Remembrance Day service. The role of the Modern Town Archivist would be further discussed.

b. Dress Code Policy

Members recommended a minor change to the Dress Code Policy.

RESOLVED: that the dress code be amended to indicate that the Mayor and Deputy Mayor wear Chains of Office at public council meetings.

c. Somerset Chairman's Community Award

The Committee had recommended that Andy Laken be nominated for this award for his sterling work in establishing the Men's Shed, now based at Old Station Building. Nominations had need to be submitted by 28th June 2024 and member sought ratification of this decision given that the council had previously supported Andy Laken for a civic award.

RESOLVED: that the decision to nominate Andy Laken for Somerset Chairman's Community Award be supported and ratified.

d. School Visit and Risk Assessment

Due to other commitments, the school would be unable to visit the Town Hall this year. Next year a date would be set further in advance.

55.24 Report of the Strategic Planning Advisory Group

a. Report of the Group

Members received the report of the Group. The key items are set out below. Potential projects included parking at Chestnut Avenue and electric charging points. The war graves in the churchyard of St Michaels Cheshire Homes would be tidied up.

b. Axbridge Children's Centre – land option

The Council had an option to purchase this land. Contact would be made with Somerset Council regarding this land, and the furlong field.

c. Axbridge Methodist Church - future

Members discussed the correspondence from the church representative. Councillor Wells would draft a letter for the Clerk to send on behalf of the Council to clarify details regarding the future of the building, the potential for community use and coordinating ideas and approaches.

RESOLVED: that the letter be sent accordingly.

56.24 General Correspondence, Consultation and Diary Dates

Members received the correspondence page and noted, in particular, the invitation to the Men’s Shed Official Opening on Saturday 13 July 2024.

The diary dates are set out below.

DIARY DATES

Date	Meeting	Time	Venue
Monday 8 July	Council	7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall
Monday 3 June	Admin and Finance	7.30pm	Zoom
Mon 10 June	Planning and Licences (if needed) Council	6.45pm TBC 7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall
Monday 15 July	Leisure and Recreation (TBC) Cemetery, Allotments and Open Spaces	6.30 8.00pm	TBC Zoom
Monday 22 July	Personnel and Protocol Planning and Licences – if needed Highways	TBC (likely 6.45) TBC (likely 7.30) TBC (likely 8pm)	
Wed 24 July	Strategic Planning	7.30pm	15 Hippisley Drive
Monday 5 August	Admin and Finance	7.30pm	Zoom

57.24 Exclusion of Press and Public –

There were no confidential updates - so no need to exclude the press and public.

58.24 CONFIDENTIAL ITEM: Leisure Recreation

a. Confidential Item: Recreation Field

No further update – the matter was with the solicitors.

Chairman

Date

Appendix A

Agenda Item 8.7a Payments for Ratification (R) and Authorisation July 2024					
Voucher	Date	Supplier	Description	Total (£)	
108	02.07.2024	Amazon (R)	Office supplies	£12.96	
107	02.07.2024	Amazon (R)	Office supplies	£23.69	
106	02.07.2024	Green Magic (R)	A4 Slim Frame with stake and T piece Dark Green	£29.10	
104	02.07.2024	Greenslades Grounds Maintenance	Grass cutting - Furlong	£172.80	
103	02.07.2024	Somerset Council	Bin emptying and public conveniences cleaning contract	£6,135.23	
102	02.07.2024	W C Maunders Ltd	Furlong maintenance	£172.70	
101	24.06.2024	Post Office	Postage	£2.90	
100	19.06.2024	Sign-holders	Signs - cemetery	£29.10	
77	31.05.2024	Amazon (R)	Office supplies	£37.40	
	02.07.2024	Payroll - July 2024	Staff salaries and assoc. payroll organisations	£4,341.63	
109	04.07.2024	A1 Gardening & Tree Surgery Ltd	Open spaces contract June 2024	£220.00	
		Graham Page	Reimbursement of Mayoral Expenses	£87.88	
		Mr A Laken	Town Maintenance Contract	£150.00	
		Maw Agri	Materials - furlong fence	£23.27	
		W C Maunders Ltd	Shelving	£38.00	
		Graham Page	Reim of valve (changing rooms)	£19.88	
			Total	£11,496.54	
NB: The PATA invoice for April 2024 was paid twice and July payroll has been credited to address this so no payment needed					
Spending Powers - the Council has the General Power of Competence					
Bank Reconciliation as at 30 June 2024 is £165,688.46					

Appendix B

Agenda Item 8.7c Direct Debits and Standing Order Payments - June 2024					
Voucher	Supplier	Description	Net	VAT	Total
99	Npower	Electricity - Moorland St Car Park	£12.29	£0.61	£12.90
98	BT	Broadband	£21.72	£4.34	£26.06
97	Zoom	Video Conferencing	£12.99	£0.00	£12.99
96	Vodafone	Telephone - Clerk contract	£14.39	£2.88	£17.27
95	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Moorland Street Car Park	£120.00	£0.00	£120.00
94	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Town Car Park	£104.00	£0.00	£104.00
93	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Council Office	£56.00	£0.00	£56.00
92	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Changing Rooms	£53.50	£0.00	£53.50
91	Water2Business	Sewerage - Moorland Street Car Park	£10.71	£0.00	£10.71
90	Water2Business	Sewerage - Town Car Park	£10.71	£0.00	£10.71
89	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Public Conveniences	£38.50	£0.00	£38.50
		Total			£462.64

Agenda Item 8.7b Receipts June 2024

Voucher	Date	Customer	Description	Total
36	30.06.2024	Lloyds Bank - savings	Bank Interest	£30.52
35	19.06.2024	Allotment Tenant 2A	Allotment rent	£25.00
33	13.06.2024	Allotment Tenant 8A	Allotment rent	£45.00
31	10.06.2024	Allotment Tenant 2B	Allotment rent	£25.00
32	10.06.2024	Allotment Tenant 3D	Allotment rent	£45.00
34	10.06.2024	Lloyds Bank	Bank Interest	£164.38
29	03.06.2024	Allotment Tenant 3A	Allotment rent	£45.00
30	03.06.2024	Allotment Tenant 1B	Allotment rent	£45.00
			Total	£424.90