



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AXBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL  
HELD ON MONDAY 10 JUNE 2024  
IN AXBRIDGE TOWN HALL**

**Meeting commenced:** 7.30pm

**Meeting concluded:** 9.20pm

**Present:** Councillor Ham (Deputy Mayor – Chairman), Browne, Faulkner, Jordan, Taylor, Wells and Willis

**Also in attendance:** Mrs V Brice (Town Clerk)

**25.24 Apologies for absence**

The Police had been unable to attend the meeting

**RESOLVED:** that apologies from Councillor Page (Mayor - personal commitment), Councillor Jenkins (personal commitment), Councillor Mitton (ill-health) and Councillor Thomas (work commitment) be received and approved.

**26.24 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.

**27.24 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 (33.24(d)) and would leave the meeting during consideration of this item.

**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 (33.24(d)) (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 (33.24(d)) and would leave the meeting during consideration of this item.

**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 (33.24(d)).

**28.24 Public Participation**

**29.24 Reports from Police and Somerset Councillors**

**Police** – members had received the crime statistics for May 2024. Members felt it would be useful to have some background information/more detailed information to identify trends and to put the figures into context.

**Somerset Councillor Ham** – Somerset Council would next meet after the general election.

### **30.24 Written Reports – Outside Bodies**

**Axbridge and District Museum Trust** – Members had received the report of the meeting held on 21 May 2024.

**80th Anniversary Celebrations to Commemorate D Day** – The Town Crier had read the cry from the Church Steps accompanied by the Mayor and representatives from the church and Royal British Legion. A beacon had been lit. The flags placed by the Sports and Social Community Association would remain in place until after the carnival. Members thanked those involved.

**Town Trust** - The Town Council would ask the Town Trust to re-display the portrait of the late Queen in the Town Hall.

### **31.24 Committee membership - publicity**

The Clerk sought clarification as to who would be taking the lead on the “website editor” role which included promoting items on the Town Council’s facebook page and on social media. This role had initially been with the Mayor.

**RESOLVED:** that Richard Willis be appointed as the website editor.

### **32.24 Planning**

#### **a. Planning and Licenses Committee – 10 June 2024**

Members received a verbal update on the meeting held just prior to Council. The Committee had made no observations on an application for a barrel sauna. The key items are set out below.

#### **b. Remit**

The Committee had considered the remit. No changes were necessary.

#### **c. Planning Policies**

The Committee had considered the following planning policies – Affordable Housing; Planning Enforcement; Process of publicising and considering very large applications. Minor amendments were needed to the last two policies to change “Sedgemoor District Council” (where appropriate) to “Somerset Council” and to remove reference to “Oyez” and replace with “social media”.

**RESOLVED:** that the policies be updated accordingly.

#### **d. Houlgate Way – update**

**At this juncture, Councillors Browne and Willis, having declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest, left the meeting.**

An update from the developers was awaited. The road had been re-opened but the 20mph sign had not been re-instated. Works were also taking place in an adjoining field which seemed to be providing a compound – with hard standing and services. It was thought that planning permission would be needed to change the use of the field.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) that Councillor Ham make enquiries to clarify the situation regarding works on the adjoining field and that the Clerk then contact Somerset Council's planning department to express the Town Council's objections;
- 2) that a letter be sent to Somerset Council's planning department objecting to the way in which the mix of affordable housing was amended to shared ownership only without any consultation with the Town Council giving the importance of the provision of a mixed tenure of affordable housing to both Councils.

**At this juncture, Councillors Browne and Willis re-joined the meeting.**

**e. Planning Application**

**Planning application number:** 02/24/00008/AGE

**Proposal:** Change of use of buildings to a dwelling.

**Location:** Land to West of St Michaels, & to the North of A371, Cheddar Road, Axbridge, Somerset, BS26

Members considered this application. Several issues had been raised by the Committee.

**RESOLVED:** that Somerset Council be advised that Axbridge Town Council objects to this application on the following grounds:

- 1) Compliance with national, regional and local planning policy and guidance: the site is outside of the settlement boundary (development plan) as per Axbridge Neighbourhood Plan with specifically no development shown on the north side of the A371 bypass road;
- 2) Effect on the landscape: the site is within the National Landscapes (formerly known as Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty);
- 3) Traffic generation and road safety: currently, vehicular access is only permitted to this site for occasional agricultural use, not regular domestic traffic. The Town Council does not understand why Somerset Highways has not objected, on this occasion, as they objected strongly to previous applications for this section of the A371 Axbridge Bypass;
- 4) Impact upon the character and appearance of the area or street – this is an agricultural area.

**33.24 Administration and Finance**

**a. Report of the Group**

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

**b. Remit**

The group recommended minor changes to the remit, as circulated, relating to the list of monthly items and, in particular, the timing of the presentation of the annual independent internal auditor's report and the system of accounting document.

**RESOLVED:** that the remit, as revised, be agreed and included within Standing Orders.

**c. External Audit**

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2023-24 (AGAR) had been submitted to the auditor on 31 May 2024 and the appropriate documentation placed on the notice board and website in accordance with the requirements. The notice of public rights would commence on 3 June 2024 – 12 July 2024. The Clerk had drawn attention to the £1 rounding error in the Statement of Accounts. The figures accurately reflected the balances carried forward from the accounts and rounding errors of up to £2 were tolerable.

**d. New Bank Accounts**

The group recommended that an Instant Savings Account and a Business Current Account be opened at the Unity Trust Bank so that all cash held by the council could be protected. The current account fees were £6 a month, with a savings interest rate of £2.75% at present. Lloyds Bank had confirmed that the Town Council was protected by the Financial Services Compensation scheme for up to £85,000 of its funds.

**RESOLVED:** that the Clerk arrange for the accounts be set up at the Unity Trust Bank and, if appropriate, be brought back to Council for signature.

**e. Accounting Items**

Members considered a document setting out accounting procedures for annual review by the Council as per the financial regulations. The document covered the bank accounts to be used; methods of payments to be used; accounting system; councillors to authorise payments; and councillors authorised to make the monthly internal audit.

**RESOLVED:** that the accounting items and procedures, as set out, be approved.

**f. Community Table**

There had been no requests, as yet, to use the community table in July.

**g. Monthly Financial Report**

Members received a monthly financial report for June 2024 setting out the payments for ratification and authorisation (including recent invoices) together with the receipts, direct debits and standing orders received/paid in May 2024. The invoice from WC Maunders, when received, would be presented to the next Council meeting. The Mayor's expenses (in the region of £67) would be paid upon receipt of the accompanying report/receipts.

**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 May be ratified and the receipts for May 2024 noted (Appendix B)

## 34.24 Highways Advisory Group

### a. Report of the Group

Members received a report of the Chairman. The next meeting of the Group would be held on 24 May 2024. Somerset Highways were carrying out repairs and were advising residents/councils to report potholes etc via the online portal (Town Council facebook page/social media)

### b. Signage

Quotes were awaited for the earlier signage. Members discussed the proposed wording for the signs in Moorland St Car Park and the car park on the Furlong. It was also suggested that a large "P" sign be ordered to put on the tall post at the entrance to Axbridge Town Council.

**RESOLVED:** that the wording of the signs be agreed and the quotes obtained accordingly.

### c. Axbridge Court Nursing Home

The Clerk had received correspondence regarding Axbridge Court Nursing Home specifically asking whether the council could consider obtaining some of the land for parking and dedicating a pedestrian right of way through to the car park. This was private land and these matters were not within the remit of the Council. Residents would have an opportunity to comment should the owners submit a planning application. The Clerk would respond accordingly.

### d. Highways Matters

- **Dogs on Lead signs** – the Chairman confirmed that there are dogs on lead signs on the Furlong. These would be checked to ensure all are still in place.
- **20mph sign – Townsend** – the Clerk would contact the owners of the property to request that the hedge around the 20mph sign be cut back and maintained so that the sign is always clearly visible.
- **Lorries – Townsend** - a resident had reported that quarry lorries/lorries delivering to the Houlgate Way site were using the small slip road into Axbridge and that two kerbstones had been knocked out of place as a result. The Clerk would contact the developers to ask that their Traffic Management Plan be updated to ensure delivery vehicles enter the site from Townsend (not from the Square) and go around the gyratory system to access the top of West Street/Houlgate Way rather than using the small slip road.
- **Parking Enforcement in The Square** – Correspondence regarding enforcement of the parking in The Square and the issuing of tickets when parked slightly over the white line would be discussed by the Group.
- **Speed Indicator Devices** – Correspondence from the Speed Watch Group updating on grant funding, training and a risk assessment would be referred to the Group. The Council had previously indicated that it would sign the Memorandum of Understanding once all the necessary information (including confirmation regarding insurance cover) had been obtained/in place. The Council confirmed that the agreement could be signed, should the group feel it was now appropriate to do so.

## **35.24 Cemeteries, Allotments and Open Spaces**

### **a. Report of the Group**

Members received an update from the Chairman. An allotment inspection would be held later this week. The next meeting of the group would be held on 17 June 2024. The key items are set out below.

### **b. Cemetery Inspection - update**

A cemetery inspection had been held on 29 May 2024.

### **c. Open Spaces Matters**

**Land at Starrs Close/Houlgate Way** – the issues with this area had been brought to the attention of Persimmons. Further information regarding ownership would be sent to them. In the interim, the Town Maintenance Contractor would be asked to cut back sufficient brambles etc to ensure that the pathways remained accessible. The overgrown tree and area on the corner of the first cul-de-sac in Starrs Close would be reported to Somerset's Tree Team.

## **36.24 Leisure and Recreation**

### **a. Report of the Group**

The Chairman gave an update. Wales and West wished to place a unit(s) on furlong car park during the holiday period to assist with their works. The new fencing had been installed and the group would discuss whether to extend/replace it any further. A further padlock with a key had been purchased for the works access gate. The graffiti on the youth shelter had been removed and repainted. Officers had contacted the school regarding their hedge and the Town Maintenance Contractor would be asked to trim back nettles. A meeting would be held with the footballers. The goal posts would be raised and consideration given to placing anti-climb paint on the containers. Discussions regarding the storage container were on-going. The Chairman would confirm the date of the next meeting.

### **b. Play Area and Public Conveniences Logs**

The logs had been completed and checked by the Chairman. Members confirmed that they did not wish to have a smart meter placed in the public convenience facility.

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

### **c. Fixed Wiring – Changing Rooms and Public Conveniences**

The electrical installation condition reports for both sites had been considered by the Group. Costing information on the recommendations within the reports was awaited.

### **d. Drinking Fountain**

The drinking fountain was now working, following a replacement tap and associated works.

## e. Town Maintenance Report

The Town Maintenance Contractor had worked 6 hours during May 2024 litter picking at various locations.

### 37.24 Personal and Protocol

#### a. Report of the Committee

The Committee had not met since the annual council meeting. The next meeting would be held on 24 June 2024. The chain was in the process of being refurbished and a final service at the Methodist Chapel would be held on 18 August 2024 – to which members were invited to attend. The Licensing Service for Reverend Sue Hoskins as Associate Priest would be held on Wednesday 12 June 2024.

### 38.24 Report of the Strategic Planning Advisory Group

#### a. Report of the Group

The Group had not met since the annual council meeting. The next meeting would be held on 19 June 2024 at 8pm and would include an agenda item regarding the Methodist Church.

### 39.24 Emergency Plan

The Emergency Plan was being revised.

### 40.24 General Correspondence, Consultation and Diary Dates

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

**Screen Somerset** – the Council would be happy to be included on Screen Somerset locations database. It was noted that the Good Girl's Guide to Murder production would be aired on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024 on BBC3.

**Silver time talks** – the Council did not wish to take up this offer.

**Somerset Libraries** – the clerk had displayed posters advertising the Home Library Service – a free service where individuals are matched with a volunteer who will select, deliver and return library books for them (Town Council facebook/social media)

**Items for the Town Council facebook/social media** – in addition to items already discussed, it was suggested that posts could include a strapline to ask residents to raise issues directly with to the Town Council and that a future post could give a brief explanation of council meetings and public participation.

The diary dates are set out below. Each Committee or group, at its first meeting after the Annual Council meeting would need to elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman, agree their remit and review their policies.

#### DIARY DATES

Date	Meeting	Time	Venue
Monday 10 June	Planning and Licences Council	6.45pm 7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall
Monday 17 June	Leisure and Recreation (TBC) Cemetery, Allotments and Open Spaces	6.30 8.00pm	TBC Zoom
Wed 19 June	Strategic Planning	8.00pm	15 Hippisley Drive

Monday 24 June	Personnel and Protocol Planning and Licences – if needed Highways	TBC (likely 6.45) TBC (likely 7.30) TBC (likely 8pm)	
Monday 1 July	Admin and Finance	7.30pm	Zoom

#### **41.24 Exclusion of Press and Public**

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

#### **42.24 CONFIDENTIAL ITEM: Leisure Recreation**

##### **a. Confidential Item: Recreation Field**

Members received an update from the Chairman of the Leisure and Recreation Advisory Group regarding the offer of land and correspondence with the solicitor.

**RESOLVED:** that the formal letter of appointment from the Solicitor be accepted, enquires be made as to searches etc recommended and that Solicitor be asked to make contact with donor's solicitors to enable matters to be progressed as soon as possible.

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Chairman

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Date



## Appendix A

Agenda Item 9.7 Payments for Ratification (R) and Authorisation June 2024					
Voucher No.	Date	Supplier	Description		Total
81-85	25.06.2024	Payroll - June 2024	Staff salaries and assoc. payroll organisations		£4,341.63
80	05.06.2024	PATA UK	Payroll - Setup and service		£37.90
79	05.06.2024	A1 Gardening and Tree Surgery Limited	Town Maintenance Contract work		£220.00
78	05.06.2024	Greenslades Grounds Maintenance	Grass cutting - Furlong		£172.80
77	31.05.2024	Amazon	Office supplies		£37.40
88	10.06.2024	Mr A Laken	Town Maintenance Contract work - May 2024		£90.00
87	10.06.2024	C Heath	Tap and repairs to drinking fountain		£89.00
86	10.06.2024	Maw Agri	Furlong Fence Materials		£200.90
		G Page	Reim of Mayor's expenses *		£67.00
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>£5,256.63</b>

\* sum in the region of £67 agreed to be paid on receipt of accompanying report/receipts

## Appendix B

Agenda Item 9.7c Direct Debits & Standing Order Payments - May 2024					
Voucher No.	Supplier	Description	Net	VAT	Total
75	SSE Southern Electric	Electricity - Changing Rooms	£87.03	£4.36	£91.39
74	SSE Southern Electric	Electricity - Public Conveniences	£69.83	£3.49	£73.32
72	Npower	Electricity - Moorland St Car Park	£12.94	£0.65	£13.59
71	BT	Broadband	£21.72	£4.34	£26.06
70	Zoom	Video Conferencing	£12.99	£0.00	£12.99
69	Vodafone	Telephone - Clerk contract	£14.39	£2.88	£17.27
68	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Moorland Street Car Park	£120.00	£0.00	£120.00
67	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Town Car Park	£104.00	£0.00	£104.00
64	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Council Office	£56.00	£0.00	£56.00
63	O2	Telephone - Assistant Clerk	£17.01	£3.40	£20.41
62	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Changing Rooms	£53.50	£0.00	£53.50
61	Water2Business	Sewerage - Moorland Street Car Park	£10.73	£0.00	£10.73
60	Water2Business	Sewerage - Town Car Park	£10.73	£0.00	£10.73
59	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Public Conveniences	£38.50	£0.00	£38.50
<b>Total</b>					<b>£648.49</b>

**Agenda Item 9.7b Receipts May 2024**

<b>Voucher No.</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Customers</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Total</b>
26	31.05.2024	Plot 8B	Allotment rent	£45.00
27	31.05.2024	Plot 8E	Allotment rent	£45.00
28	31.05.2024	Lloyds Bank - savings	Bank Interest	£33.77
25	21.05.2024	HMRC VAT	VAT refund - changing rooms	£722.61
23	16.05.2024	Plot 3C	Allotment rent	£25.00
21	09.05.2024	Plot 7B	Allotment rent	£45.00
24	09.05.2024	Lloyds Bank	Bank Interest	£71.18
16	07.05.2024	Plot 3B	Allotment rent	£25.00
19	07.05.2024	Plot 9C	Allotment rent	£25.00
20	07.05.2024	Plot 8C	Allotment rent	£25.00
17	02.05.2024	Plot 9D	Allotment rent	£25.00
18	02.05.2024	Plot 9A	Allotment rent	£25.00
22	01.05.2024	HMRC VAT	VAT repayment	£502.42
<b>Total</b>				<b>£1,614.98</b>