



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AXBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN
AXBRIDGE TOWN HALL ON MONDAY 11 MARCH 2024**

Meeting commenced: 7.30p.m.

Meeting concluded: 8.51.p.m.

Present: Councillor Mitton (Mayor), Ham, Jenkins, Jordan, Taylor, Thomas, Wells and Willis

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

174.23 Apologies for Absence

RESOLVED: that apologies from Councillor Browne (personal commitment), Mearns (ill-health) and Page – Deputy Mayor (personal commitment) be received and approved.

175.23 Draft Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 12 February 2024

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 February 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair subject to the dates and months shown in the minutes relating to the Monthly Financial Report and the Highways Report being corrected.

176.23 Declarations of Interest and Application for Dispensations

Declarations of Interest:

Councillor Taylor: declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in relation to the planning application 21/23/00017/DT regarding proposed changes to conditions to the gas-powered energy generation facility (minute 181.23(b) refers) and would leave the meeting during consideration of this item.

Dispensations: no dispensations were needed for the meeting.

177.23 Reports

ORGANISATIONS	REPORTS
Police	The Council received the crime statistics for February 2024.
Somerset Councillor Ferguson	Somerset Councillor Ferguson had attended the Local Community Network (LCN) meeting, had been involved in a flooding matter and was still assisting in the laptop Donate It scheme. Members would promote this scheme which enables those eligible to apply for a refurbished laptop.
Somerset Councillor Ham	Somerset Councillor Ham updated on the LCN and specifically plans to set up a Highways Sub Committee, with interested parties, to look at highways and active travel matters.

178.23 Public Participation - none

179.23 Written Reports – Outside Bodies

Axbridge and District Museum Trust – members had previously received an update on the last meeting.

Batts Combe Quarry Community Liaison Meeting – Councillor Taylor had attended the last meeting. The minutes would be circulated in due course. Grant requests could be made where appropriate.

Church Fete – the church fete would be held on alternate years going forward – with Axbridge Open Gardens taking place this year, and the fete in 2025.

180.23 Committee and Group membership - Group membership was up to date.

181.23 Planning

a) Report of the Chairman

Work had commenced at Houlgate Way. There had been a few comments in relation to the fence. Correspondence had also been received regarding the former Axbridge Court Nursing Home and the Clerk had/would respond accordingly.

b) Planning Application

At this juncture, Councillor Taylor, having declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in this item, left the meeting.

Planning application number: 21/23/00017/DT

Proposal: Variations of conditions 2, 4 and 6 of Planning Permission 21/20/00003 (Development of a gas-powered energy generation facility and associated infrastructure for a temporary period of 25 years.) to amend soft and hard landscaping.

Location: Land To The South West Of, Townsend Farm, Prowses Lane, Townsend, Axbridge, Somerset, BS26

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

At this juncture, Councillor Taylor re-joined the meeting.

182.23 Administration and Finance

a) Report of the Chairman

Members received the report following the meeting of the group. The key items are set out below. The group had agreed that the Town Council should no longer pay for a PO Box given the limited post being received. Contact details were on the website should any post be returned to sender by the post office. The official postal address would be The Council Office at the Church Rooms for all communications.

b) Open Spaces Contract

In accordance with the previous decision the Clerk had written to all the contractors to extend the contract by one year. The contractor for the hedge works would be happy to continue but would need to increase his price for the coming year, due to increased costs. The existing contractor for the open spaces work at the allotments and

cemetery had provided a quote to carry out additional work to the allotment paths and to treat and manage the moss at the cemetery as previously agreed.

RESOLVED: that the additional cost of the hedge cutting works (£70 plus VAT) for the coming year be agreed; and the quotes for the additional allotment work and cemetery work (£520 plus VAT in total) be agreed for the coming year.

c) Monthly Audit Checker

Councillor Wells would be happy to be involved in the checking of the accounts. She had undertaken this role previously.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Wells be appointed as a bank reconciliation checker.

d) Draft Calendar of Meetings

Members considered a draft Calendar of Meeting for 2025. Members only wished to confirm/agree the dates for the new Council year (May 2024 – May 2025) and the Clerk would present a revised calendar to the group for consideration.

e) Community Table

The bus group would use the community space in April 2024. Somerset Council would like it on 1 June 2024 to promote the volunteer driver role. Local groups would be able to borrow a table from the church rooms, if required, subject to certain provisions.

f) Monthly Financial Report

Members received a monthly financial report for March 2024 setting out the payments for ratification and authorisation together with recent invoices and payments for ratification. The Clerk also advised that the Council had not been invoiced by Adams Memorials for the past provision of 14 foundation bases at the cemetery. These bases had been included in the cemetery fees charged and the Council agreed that payment should be made.

The financial report also included the receipts received and direct debit and standing orders payments made during February 2024. The report advised that the SSE contracts had finally been uploaded to the site – so this should be all rectified shortly.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the list of payment of invoices (including those recently received) be ratified and approved together with payment to Adams Memorials in the sum of £560 – to be paid upon receipt of invoice (complete list attached at Appendix A); and
- 2) that the Direct Debit and Standing Order payments for February be ratified and the receipts for February 2024 noted (Appendix A)

183.23 Highways Advisory Group

a) Report of the Highways Advisory Group – February 2024

Members received the report of the Group. The key items are set out below. The Chairman would speak with the Town Trust regarding the siting of the sign for the disabled bay in The Square.

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. The Group had recommended taking the opportunity to revise/update the wording on the notice boards and considered the new wording at the meeting – which just set out the key regulations more clearly. The quote for these two regulation sign was imminent and the Council wished to get the signs installed as soon as possible to regulate the situation.

RESOLVED: that the wording of the car park regulation signs be agreed and that the Clerk be delegated to place the order, following consultation with Chairman and highways members (if the cost was not as expected and members had any concerns, this matter would be brought back to Council).

c) Town Gateway Sign

The Council had previously agreed the purchase of the gateway signage for installation at the top end of Cheddar Road with further costings to be obtained for the posts. The group suggested the siting of the sign near by the 40pmh sign (by Barnabas Close) – with the size of sign and height of posts to be confirmed. A site meeting was being arranged with Somerset Highways.

d) Speed Indicator Devices

The Council had previously agreed to sign the Memorandum of Understanding. However, Somerset Council had raised a question regarding the insurance of the cameras and the matter had been further discussed by the group. The requirements in the documentation conflicted with the discussion held with the Speed Watch Group. A letter had been sent to the group representatives accordingly. The Council appreciated the work of the group and hoped that there was a way forward without adding an additional burden of cost on the electorate.

e) Highways Matters

Lining works – the report included a list of lining requests. Members were asked to let the Chairman know if anything needed to be added. It was noted that the 30mph roundel at the top of Cheddar Road needed refreshing and this would be added. Some of the bollards along Old Church Road had also been knocked down.

Chapter 8 Training – Councillors Page and Willis had attended this training which had been re-assuring as far as their involvement with the Sport and Social Group was concerned.

Verge cutting - was an ongoing topic at the Local Community Network meetings and Somerset Council would be issuing a timetable as to when they would be continuing to cut the verges this coming year.

Potholes and road surfaces – these were generally deteriorating and specific concerns would be raised with Somerset Highways

Townsend Drain – this was no longer draining with a lot of water now gathering at this junction. This would be further raised with Somerset Highways.

20mph sign – Houlgate Way – it was understood that the sign had been removed when the lamppost was taken down. The timing to reinstall the street lighting was not clear and the 20mph sign needed to be in place. The developers would be asked to ensure the sign was reinstated (and provide a post if necessary).

184.23 Cemeteries, Allotments and Open Spaces Group

a) Report of the Chairman

The group had not met recently. The next meeting would be held on 18 March 2024. Several allotments remained empty (two of which were very overgrown). The allotments would be advertised and further considered at the meeting. The Chairman would also inspect the new path at the bottom of the cemetery which had been provided to assist access to the older part of the Garden of Remembrance. It was noted that a resident may have some free paving slabs available. The entrance sign to the cemetery would be gilded as soon as the weather improved.

b) Allotment Path works

The Council had previously agreed works to address the subsiding path by Plot 2B (levelling and fencing). The tenant had raised some concerns about the intended works. It was necessary to ensure that the path was safely accessible.

c) Open Spaces Matter - none

185.23 Leisure and Recreation

a) Report of the Chairman

Members received the report of the Group. The key items are set out below. The litter and bin contact had been renewed for the coming year and remained within budget. The furlong car park fencing was in hand and materials had been ordered to carry out maintenance works at the Changing Rooms and Public Conveniences.

b) Play Area and Public Conveniences Logs – February 2024

The logs had been completed and checked by the Chairman, who updated members.

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

c) Fixed Wiring – Changing Rooms and Public Conveniences

The inspection and testing on the fixed wiring at the Changing Rooms had taken place and the Condition Report received. The Conditions Report following the inspection at the Public Conveniences was expected imminently. Recommendations for improvements had been made/ were expected and the reports would be discussed by the Group in the first instance.

d) Signs – Play area

The Council had previously agreed to the provision of two no ball games signs.

e) Town Maintenance Contractor

The Town Maintenance Contractor had worked 16 hours during February 2024. 4 hours had been spent litter picking the furlong and car parks, clearing gullies, tidying

up and removing rubbish from the cemetery, 6 hours creating the path at the cemetery, 3.5 hours tidying up the corner of the car park and 1.5 hours cleaning the bus shelters.

186.23 Personnel and Protocol Committee

a) Draft minutes of the Personnel and Protocol Committee meeting – 26 February 2024

Members received the draft minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2024.

b) Civic Service

The Civic Service held on 3 March 2024 had been a lovely occasion and well attended. The Mayor thanked all those involved. The Clerk would arrange for a press release with photos.

RESOLVED: that a donation of £50 be made to Cheddar Guides and Rangers for their assistance in serving refreshments.

c) Mayor's Banquet

The Mayor hoped to hold her Mayor's Banquet on 20 April 2024, subject to ticket numbers.

187.23 Strategic Planning

a) Report of the Chairman

A meeting would be arranged shortly.

188.23 Nomination of Mayor and Deputy Mayor

The Chairman sought nominations for Mayor and Deputy Mayor for 2024/25. Councillor Mitton nominated Councillor Page as Mayor, which was duly seconded. No other nominations were received.

Councillor Mitton proposed Councillor Ham as Deputy Mayor, which was duly seconded. She had submitted her interest in this role. No other nominations had been received or were forthcoming.

Members noted that the Annual Council meeting and Mayor Making ceremony would be held on Monday 13 May 2024.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that Councillor Page be nominated as Mayor for 2024/25 (Councillor Mitton and Councillor Ham); and
- 2) that Councillor Ham be nominated as Deputy Mayor for 2024/25 (Councillor Mitton and Councillor Wells)

189.23 General Correspondence and Diary Dates

Members received the correspondence page including information relating to Martyn's Law.

The diary dates are set out below

Date	Meeting	Time	Venue
Monday 11 March	Council	7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall
Mon 18 March	Leisure and Recreation (TBC) Cemetery, Allotments and Open Spaces	8.00pm	Zoom
Monday 25 Feb	Personnel and Protocol Planning and Licences – if needed Highways	TBC (likely 6.45) TBC (likely 7.30) TBC (likely 8pm)	
TBC	Strategic Planning	TBC	
Thursday 4 April	Admin and Finance	7.30pm	Zoom
Monday 8 April	Planning and Licences Council	TBC 7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall
Mon 4 March	Annual Assembly	8pm	
Wed 6 March	LCN	6.30pm	Draycott Village Hall
Monday 11 March	Planning and Licences Council	TBC 7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall

Chairman

Date

Appendix A

Agenda Item 9.6a Payments for Ratification (R) and Authorisation - March 2024

Voucher No.	Date	Supplier	Description	Total
401	12.03.2024	1st Cheddar Guides	Donation - Civic Service	50.00
397	12.03.2024	Amazon	Stationery	18.58
396	12.03.2024	Amazon	Materials - Changing Rooms and Public Con	149.31
395	12.03.2024	Adams Memorials	10 Foundation Bases	400.00
394	12.03.2024	Adams Memorials	4 Foundation Bases	160.00
393	11.03.2024	Mr A Laken	Town Maintenance Con. & cem path	£294.95
392	05.03.2024	PATA Payroll Services	March 2024 Payroll	£37.90
391	05.03.2024	Chris Norman Electrical	Electical Installation Report Changing Rooms	£570.00
390	04.03.2024	Carole Kent Traditional Signwriters	Signwriting Town Hall Boards	£240.35
389	04.03.2024	Carole Kent Traditional Signwriters	Signwriting Town Hall Boards	£48.07
388	04.03.2024	Sainsburys (R)	Civic Service Refreshments	£23.60
387	04.03.2024	The Post Office (R)	Civic Service Gift Bags	£3.20
386	04.03.2024	Premier Trophies	Civic Service Awards	£53.98
385	04.03.2024	Bridgwater Town Council	Training	£376.80
384	04.03.2024	Greenslades Grounds Maintenance	Grass cutting - Furlong	£172.80
378	21.02.2024	Shaw & Sons Ltd (R)	Attendance Register	£117.60
			TOTAL	£2,717.14
NB - after the meeting it was noted that the monthly payroll figure had not been included in the list. This was in accordance with contract and would be ratified at the next meeting.				

NB Powers of Spending: The Town Council has the General Power of Competence; The latest bank reconciliation – to 29 February 2024 - £65,682.07SSE contracts now uploaded and billing should be correct from now on.

Agenda Item 9.6b Receipts February 2024

Voucher No	Date	Customer	Description	Total
92	29.02.2024	Lloyds Bank - savings	Bank Interest	£32.60
91	26.02.2024	Lloyds Bank	Bank Interest	£52.97
90	09.02.2024	HMRC VAT	VAT repayment	£2,789.30
			TOTAL	£2,874.87

Agenda Item 9.6C Direct Debit and Standing Order Payments - February 2024

Voucher	Supplier	Description	Net	VAT	Total
382	Zoom	Video Conferencing	£12.99	£0.00	£12.99
380	Vodafone	Telephone - Clerk contract	£13.34	£2.67	£16.01
379	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Town Car Park	£104.00	£0.00	£104.00
373	BT	Broadband	£18.95	£3.79	£22.74
372	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Changing Roo	£30.50	£0.00	£30.50
371	Water2Business	Sewerage - Moorland Street Car Park	£10.22	£0.00	£10.22
370	Water2Business	Sewerage - Town Car Park	£10.22	£0.00	£10.22
369	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Public Conven	£54.50	£0.00	£54.50
368	Npower	Electricity - Moorland St Car Park	£15.91	£0.80	£16.71
367	O2	Telephone - Assistant Clerk	£15.63	£3.13	£18.76
356	Information Commissioners Office	GDPR Data Protection Renewal	£40.00	£0.00	£40.00
383	SSE	Electricity - Axbridge Town Car Park	£57.95	£2.90	£60.85
	TOTAL				£336.65

NB – The payment to the Information Commissioner was taken by Direct Debit instead of bank transfer (as previously agreed)