



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AXBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL HELD IN  
AXBRIDGE TOWN HALL ON MONDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2024**

**Meeting commenced:** 7.30p.m.

**Meeting concluded:** 9.44p.m.

**Present:** Councillor Page (Deputy Mayor – in the Chair), Ham, Jenkins, Jordan, Mearns (from minute 163.23), Taylor, Thomas, and Willis

**Also in attendance:** Mrs V Brice (Town Clerk) together PC Smith, PCSO Chard, Somerset Councillor Ferguson and 2 members of the public (for part of the meeting)

**158.23 Apologies for Absence**

In the absence of the Mayor, Councillor Page, as Deputy Mayor, chaired the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** that apologies from Councillor Mitton – Mayor (ill-health), Councillor Browne (personal commitment), Councillor Faulkner (work commitment) and Councillor Wells (personal commitment), be received and approved.

**159.23 Draft Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 8 January 2024**

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 8 January 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**160.23 Declarations of Interest and Application for Dispensations**

**Declarations of Interest:**

Councillor Jenkins: declared a Personal Interest in the item relating to the request for a pedestrian access into the car park being related to the applicant (minute 168.23(e))

**Dispensations:** no dispensations were needed for the meeting.

**161.23 Reports**

Members agreed to bring forward the report from the Police.

ORGANISATIONS	REPORTS
Police	The Council received the crime statistics for January 2024. PC Smith and PCSO Chard outlined the statistics and current staffing arrangements. Members would welcome assistance in enforcing the “Stop” sign at Townsend.

**162.23 Public Participation**

**At this juncture, Councillor Mearns joined the meeting and the Council:**

**RESOLVED:** that Standing Order 1(f) be suspended in so far as it relates to the three minute time allowance, to enable the representatives of the Heliers Lane planning application (17/23/00010) to make a brief presentation to the Council.

Members received a presentation accordingly.

### 163.23 Reports

ORGANISATIONS	REPORTS
Somerset Councillor Ham	Somerset Councillor Ham updated on the financial position and situation regarding the recycling sites. A full Somerset Council meeting would be held next week.
Somerset Councillor Ferguson	Somerset Councillor Ferguson would forward a written report covering several items and the current financial situation.

### 164.23 Written Reports – Outside Bodies

Axe Valley Men's Shed – Members received a report on the work of the Men's Shed.

### 165.23 Committee and Group membership

Councillor Wells had indicated which groups she wished to join.

**RESOLVED:** that Councillor Wells joins the Highways and Strategic Planning groups and Councillor Willis joins the Highways and Leisure and Recreation Groups.

### 166.23 Planning

#### a) Planning and Licences Committee meeting – 12 February 2024

The Chairman updated on the meeting held just prior to Council which had considered three household planning applications and noted updates relating to the Old Manor House, St Micheal Cheshire Homes and Axbridge Court Nursing Home. A date for the installation of the street lighting at Houlgate Way was awaited and the leaning fence had been brought to the attention of the developers.

#### b) CPRE (The Countryside Charity)

The Committee had recommended that the Council renews its membership of this organisation at a cost of £36.00 when due (March 2024)

**RESOLVED:** that the membership of this organisation be renewed accordingly.

#### c) Planning Application

**Planning application number:** 17/23/00100

**Proposal:** Erection of 28 no. dwellings, highways access, landscaping and associated works

**Location:** Land to the North of Helliars Lane, Cheddar

Members had received a presentation earlier in the meeting.

**RESOLVED:** that Axbridge Town Council objects to this application on the grounds of traffic generation and road safety - specifically the impact of the proposed development on the highway and nearby junctions due to additional traffic generation.

## **167.23 Administration and Finance**

### **a) Report of the Chairman**

Members received the report following the meeting held on 5 February 2024. The key items are set out below. Members noted that that the Council's financial regulations required updating and a new version was being prepared. However, a new model version would shortly be issued by the National Association of Local Councils and the advice was to wait for this documentation before making any further changes.

### **b) Appointment of Internal Audit**

The Group recommended the Council re-appoint Mr Young – a respected local clerk with auditing experience. Mr Young had confirmed he would be available to audit the accounts for 2023/24 on the same basis as last year, which members considered reasonable.

**RESOLVED:** that Richard Young be appointed as the Council's Internal Auditor for the accounts 2023/24.

### **c) Risk Assessment**

The group had reviewed the Risk Assessment and Management Document and recommended an updated version - making minor amendments.

**RESOLVED:** that the Risk Assessment and Management Document, as circulated, be approved and adopted.

### **d) Open Spaces Contract**

The Group recommended that, as there was so much uncertainty about the grass cutting and maintenance of open spaces needed next year, that the tendering process (set for every four years and due now) should be delayed for a year. There were some additional works proposed for the forthcoming year (relating to the maintenance of the paths at the allotment and cemetery) and it was proposed that the existing contractor be asked to quote for these works on a one-off basis for next year, prior to the tendering process planned to cover the following year.

**RESOLVED:** that, given the circumstances, the existing Open Spaces Contracts be extended for one year and that the existing contractor (covering the ground work at the allotments and cemetery) be asked to quote for the additional work to the paths proposed for this coming year.

### **e) Axbridge and District Museum Trust**

Members considered a request for a grant towards the King John's Hunting Lodge to help ensure the museum could continue to provide its service which benefited visitors, volunteers and the local community. The council had included £1400 in the budget.

**RESOLVED:** that a grant of £1400 be made to Axbridge and District Museum Trust

#### **f) Children's Air Ambulance Service**

Members had previously received a short presentation relating to this service. The group recommended including this organisation in its annual consideration of Type A grants which are considered in September. Members also considered whether to make a donation this financial year. Sports and Social Community Association also planned to invite them to have a stall at the Fun Day.

**RESOLVED:** that a grant of £50.00 be made to the Children's Air Ambulance Service in support of their work.

#### **g) Purchase of Attendance Book**

Although not mandatory, the Group recommend the purchase of a new register to continue to record attendance. A bound attendance book, as previously used, could be obtained for the same supplier at a cost of £98 plus VAT.

**RESOLVED:** that the Attendance Book be purchased accordingly.

#### **h) Mobile Telephone – Assistant Town Clerk**

This contract was now sim only at a cost of £18.76 a month and the device was relatively old causing issues with retaining charge and downloads. Councillor Mearns and the Assistant Clerk had considered options including the purchase of a new phone (sim only) which would generate a saving for the council. Members were happy to progress a new deal at a better rate than the existing arrangements (checking with the current provider for deals they could offer)

**RESOLVED:** that the Clerk be delegated to arrange for the provision of a new phone/package for the Assistant Clerk

#### **i) Monthly Financial Report**

Members received a monthly financial report for February 2024 setting out the payments for ratification and authorisation together with recent invoices.

The financial report also included the receipts received and direct debit and standing orders payments made during January 2023. The Clerk advised that the SSE direct debit payment of £32 had not been taken this month either and she had also just received a large invoice for the car park lighting. The issue with uploading the contracts to rectify this had not yet been resolved. She had spoken with SSE who had assured her that the rates would be implemented and back dated to the correct start and sought assurance that overpayments would be rectified. The Npower payment also seemed high but it was thought this may be due to seasonal variations.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) that the list of payment of invoices (including those recently received and the grants authorised earlier in the meeting) be ratified and approved (complete list attached at Appendix A); and
- 2) that the Direct Debit and Standing Order payments for January ratified and the receipts for December 2023 noted (Appendix A)

## **168.23 Highways Advisory Group**

### **a) Report of the Highways Advisory Group – January 2023**

Members received the report of the Group. Works were in progress to draw up a list of lining works required. Lining works in Cheddar Road and at the entrance to St Johns Court would be added to the list. Following correspondence from a resident, the Chairman had asked the Town Maintenance Contractor to tidy up the area at the layby. The vegetation to the side of the lane between Townsend and the A371 was in a good state – the Town Maintenance Contractor would be asked to just remove the broken tree/branch half way up on the right.

### **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. Following further consideration it may be that the opportunity should be taken to revise the wording on the regulation signs and this would be considered by the Highway Advisory Group.

### **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 sign near by the 40pmh sign (by Barnabas Close) – with the size of sign and height of posts to be confirmed. The site would need to be agreed by Somerset Highways with clarification as to who would carry out the works.

### **d) Axbridge to Cross Safe Path Campaign**

The Mayor and Chairman of the Group would meet with the Cross Lane footpath committee.

### **e) Request for a gate access**

A request had been received from a resident, since the group meeting, for a gate access to be installed into the back of the property in Old Church Road, which bordered Axbridge Town Car Park. Members had no objection to a pedestrian access at this location (which would open onto the grass verge – not affecting parking spaces) but felt that an agreement should be drawn up between the parties involved.

**RESOLVED:** that this matter be discussed at the group meeting, to consider/draw up a draft agreement for consideration at the next meeting of Council.

### **f) Decluttering of Signs**

The group were not aware of any redundant signs except on the brow of the hill on the A371 towards Cheddar, indicating a campsite.

#### **g) Speed Indicator Devices**

The Mayor and Chairman of the Group had met with representatives from the Speed Watch group. It was recommended that the Council sign the Memorandum of Understanding which would not involve any cost to the Council but was a necessary stage in the process to obtain the support of the Police. The SID group would carry out all work involved in the project on behalf of the Council (including the preparation of grant applications, which would then need to be signed by the Clerk). The intention was to apply to the Police Road Safety Fund for a grant to cover the main cost of two devices and meet with Highways to advise on suitable sites. The police would cover insurance and the team would be trained to move the devices and charge the devices as needed.

**RESOLVED:** that the Memorandum of Understanding be signed accordingly.

#### **h) Highways Matters**

Bins on pavements – one of the bins had been removed. A note had been placed on the bin at High Street and officers would seek to establish whether it was being used. Townsend drains – the drains at Townsend were not working, with the flooding in this area getting worse. This would be further reported to Somerset Highways (to ensure the drains were cleared and regularly maintained), who would also be reminded of an ongoing issue on the bypass (at its junction with Wood Lane).

### **169.23 Cemeteries, Allotments and Open Spaces Group**

#### **a) Report of the Group – January 2024**

Members received the report of the Group updating on allotment, cemetery and open spaces matters. The next meeting would take place on 19 February 2024.

#### **b) Allotment Path works**

The Town Maintenance Contractor had looked at the subsiding path by Plot 2B and estimated that the cost of materials to provide fencing to enable the path to be levelled would be £175.

**RESOLVED:** that the costs be agreed and the Town Maintenance Contractor be asked to carry out these works accordingly.

#### **c) Open Spaces Matter - none**

### **170.23 Leisure and Recreation**

#### **a) Report of the Chairman**

Members received the report of the Group following the meeting held in January 2024. The key items are set out below. The Facilities Manager would be purchasing a recommended product to treat the moss on the safety surfacing.

**b) Play Area and Public Conveniences Logs**

The logs were not available, but inspections were taking place with visual checks of all equipment. The logs had been revised and would be available at the next meeting.

**c) Public Conveniences - works**

Members considered a quote from a local, respected contractor carry out an inspection and testing on the fixed wiring to complete an Electrical Installation Condition Report (a legal requirement) and to carry out works to the floodlights.

**RESOLVED:** that, given the nature and urgency of the works, the quote from CNE in the sum of £580 be approved and the works carried out accordingly.

**d) Changing Rooms – works**

Members considered a quote from a local, respected contractor to carry out an inspection and testing on the fixed wiring to complete an Electrical Installation Condition Report. This was a legal requirement.

**RESOLVED:** that, given the nature and urgency of the works, the quote from CNE in the sum of £570 be approved and the works carried out accordingly.

**e) Fence – Furlong Car Park**

The fence to the furlong car park had been damaged again and was now beyond repair. An estimate for the materials needed to repair the fence was £500. It was important to carry out this work as soon as possible to prevent vehicles driving onto the field and to prevent potential injury. Members supported the need to reinstall the fencing and suggested that “treated half rounds” may be more cost efficient than decking planks (whilst still being effective). The Mayor would discuss the materials with the Facilities Manager and supplier(s).

**RESOLVED:** that the cost of materials of up to £500 be approved, in order to facilitate the re-installation of the fencing to the Furlong.

**f) Somerset Playing Fields Association**

This association would be carrying out the playground safety inspections late Spring/early Summer. The field of the year competitions would also be running and the Council would enter accordingly.

**g) Litter Bins**

The group proposed that a litter bin be purchased to fix to the railings (cost £126.56). Members considered this but as there were a couple of litter bins in the car park and no particular issue with litter at this site, did not wish to pursue this at the present time.

**h) Signs – Play area**

The group recommended the purchase of two no ball games signs – a quote had been requested. Members supported the provision of these signs and would consider, in future, signage giving contact details of the council.

**i) Town Maintenance Contractor**

The Town Maintenance Contractor had worked 5.5 hours during January 2024. This time had been spent litter picking the furlong and car parks, clearing gullies and tidying up and removing rubbish from the cemetery.

**171.23 Personnel and Protocol Committee**

**a) Draft minutes of the Personnel and Protocol Committee meeting – 22 January 2024**

Members received the draft minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2024.

**b) Mayor’s Chain**

The company had the Mayor’s Chain in order to provide a quote for the works proposed. The quote was awaited.

**172.23 Strategic Planning**

**a) Report of the Group**

Members received the report of the Group including an update and letter sent to Axbridge Action Group in response to their request for parking on the Old Station Building land.

**173.23 General Correspondence and Diary Dates**

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

- “Cheddar Gorge for Everyone” – Consultation (Experimental Traffic Regulation Order)
- “Sloppy Slippers” Campaign – by NHS Somerset and Somerset Activity and Sports Partnership to address the high risk of falls in adults, particularly the over-65 population, due to poorly fitting footwear (social media)
- “Box Orienteering” – proposing to hold an event on 15 May – Councillor Page would speak to the organisers.
- Fostering in Somerset – the Fostering Team would be invited to the Fun Day.

The diary dates are set out below – Chairman would need to prepare reports for the Annual Assembly. It was confirmed that the Local Community Network meetings were open to the public to attend.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Venue</b>
Monday 12 Feb	Council	7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall
Mon 19 Feb	Leisure and Recreation (TBC) Cemetery, Allotments and Open Spaces	8.00pm	Zoom
Monday 26 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	
Thurs 29 Feb	Admin and Finance	7.30pm	Zoom



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

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Chairman

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Date



## Appendix A Monthly Financial Report

Agenda Item 9.9a Payments for Ratification (R) and Authorisation - February 2024				
332	15.01.2024	PATA UK (R)	Payroll - service	£30.60
344-348	Various	Payroll - January 2024 (R)	Staff salaries and assoc. payroll organisations	4341.63
333	15.01.2024	Amazon (R)	Office supplies (this entry had already been added)	£0.00
343	17.01.2024	Amazon (R)	Hygiene bin, Public Conveniences	£38.99
349	26.01.2024	EasyFrame (R)	Civic Service expenses	£48.60
350	29.01.2024	Amazon (R)	Civic service and admin expenses	£26.07
352	31.01.2024	Society of Local Council Clerks Enterprises	Subscriptions	£154.00
353	31.01.2024	A1 Gardening and Tree Surgery Limited	Open Spaces Contract - various	£220.00
354	31.01.2024	A1 Gardening and Tree Surgery Limited	Open Spaces Contract - various	£220.00
355	31.01.2024	PATA UK	Payroll - Setup and service	£7.30
356	31.01.2024	Information Commissioners Office	GDPR Data Protection Renewal	£40.00
357	31.01.2024	H&H Alarms Ltd	Office Alarm	£103.80
358	06.02.2024	PATA UK	Payroll - Setup and service	£37.90
359	23.02.2024	Payroll - February 2024	Staff salaries and assoc. payroll organisations	£4,341.63
360	08.02.2024	Starboard Systems Ltd t/a Scribe Accounts	Cemetery and Allotments renewal	835.20
361	08.02.2024	Starboard Systems Ltd t/a Scribe Accounts	Accounts renewal	792.00
362	08.02.2024	W C Maunders	Materials - Furlong and Public Conveniences	54.14
363	08.02.2024	Axbridge & District Museum Trust	Grant	1400.00
	08.02.2024	Town Maintenance Contractor	Town Maintenance Contractor - January 2004	82.50
	08.02.2024	Children's Air Ambulance	Grant	50.00
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£12,691.86</b>
NB Powers of Spending: The Town Council has the General Power of Competence				
The latest bank reconciliation reconciled the accounts to 31 January 2024 - Total: £69 413.06				

Agenda Item 9.9b Receipts January 2024				
Voucher No	Date	Customer	Description	Total
89	31.01.2024	Lloyds Bank - savings	Bank Interest	£36.99
86	27.01.2024	Mark Sheppard (M J Sheppard Funeral Directors)	Cemetery fees	£120.00
87	27.01.2024	Axbridge Saxons Juniors and Axbridge United c/o Richard Willis	Hire of changing rooms	£1,295.00
88	09.01.2024	Lloyds Bank	Bank Interest	£59.48
			<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,511.47</b>

Agenda item 9.9c Direct Debit and Standing Order Payments - January 2024					
Voucher No	Supplier	Description	Net	VAT	Total
351	Zoom	Video Conferencing	£12.99	£0.00	£12.99
342	Npower	Electricity - Moorland St Car Park	£14.85	£0.74	£15.59
341	Public Works Loan Board	Loan Repayment - Town Car Park	£5,201.03	£0.00	£5,201.03
340	BT	Broadband	£18.95	£3.79	£22.74

