



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF AXBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL
HELD ON MONDAY 14 OCTOBER 2024
IN AXBRIDGE TOWN HALL**

Meeting commenced: 7.30pm

Meeting concluded: 9.45pm

Present: Councillor Page (Mayor), Ham (Deputy Mayor), Browne, Jordan, Wells (from minute 96.24) and Willis.

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

91.24 Apologies for absence

The Clerk had declared the vacancy, following the resignation of Councillor Mitton. The Council would be free to co-opt to fill this particular vacancy after 17 October 2024 (as long as an election was not requested).

The Police had been unable to attend but had given a brief update on anti-social behaviour.

RESOLVED: that apologies from Councillor Jenkins (personal commitment) and Taylor (personal commitment) be received and approved.

92.24 Draft Minutes of the Council Meetings held on 9 September 2024

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 9 September 2024 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman subject to the heading of minute 86.24 being amended to read "Personnel and Protocol".

93.24 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 (minute 97.24(b) refers) and would leave the meeting should this item be discussed.

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 (minute 97.24(b) refers) and would leave the meeting should this item be discussed.

Dispensations: no dispensations were required.

94.24 Public Participation – one member of the public spoke regarding surveying works in local fields. The Council had not received any information or applications at the present time.

95.24 Reports from Police and Somerset Councillors

Police – there had been some anti-social behaviour, mainly in Cheddar. Members were also aware of an accident at Townsend.

Somerset Councillors – Somerset Councillor Ferguson advised would be issue the summary reports which contained budget/financial information. Somerset Councillor Ham advised of changes to membership of The Executive. The consultation process for redundancies had begun.

At this stage, Councillor Wells joined the meeting.

96.24 Written Reports – Outside Bodies

Governor’s Report – Axbridge First School – to be submitted to a future meeting.
Axbridge Sports and Social Community Association: no further update

97.24 Planning

a. Draft Minutes of the Planning and Licences Committee – 23 September 2024

Members received the draft minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 2024.

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

b. Houlgate Way

The road closure was moving towards the Chemist. The Town Car Park remained accessible from Houlgate Way. The Clerk had received correspondence querying changes to the plan. The plans had not changed with the play area and green space sited at front and the Clerk would respond accordingly. Members also noted correspondence with the developer regarding qualifying persons for the shared ownership properties. The Clerk would respond with the criteria set out in the S106.

c. Biodiversity Policy

Members considered a recommendation from the Committee.

RESOLVED: that the template policy be adopted as a guide towards the Council’s own biodiversity aspirations.

d. Notification of Certificate of Lawfulness – Compass House (02/24/00013/JMS)

The Council had been notified of a Certificate of Lawfulness for the proposed addition of 12 black solar panels (5.220 kw) to the south facing pitched elevation of the detached garage of Compass House, Townsend (Planning application number: 02/24/00013/JMS).

e. Tree Planning application delegated to the Clerk: 40 West Street (02/24/00025/SR)

The Council had been notified of an application to remove 2 No. stems of 1No. Macrocarpa (T1) from either side of main stem at 40 West Street. The Clerk had delegated authority to responded to tree applications in domestic gardens and would reply with no observations.

98.24 Administration and Finance

a. Report of the Group

The group had met on Monday 7 October 2024 and considered, in the main, the draft budget and precept (minute 104.24 refers) and grant allocations. The draft report had been sent to the group members and would then be forwarded to all members for information. The key items are set out below. The tree survey would take place on 15 October 2024.

b. 2nd Quarter Report

Members received the 2nd Quarter Report setting out the receipts and payments to 30 September 2024. A couple of minor changes would be made to the administration allocations. Members noted that the Monthly Internal Audits for July, August and September 2024 had been carried out and no issues had been raised.

RESOLVED: that the 2nd Quarter Report (with minor revisions) be approved accordingly.

c. Type A Grants

The Group recommended that Type A Grants be awarded to various organisations. It was suggested that the Handbells Grant be allocated to the Local Community Grant cost code. The remaining Type A grants, if agreed, would be £550 (a bit higher than the £400 initially budgeted). Members were happy to exceed the budget allocation on this occasion being aware of the needs of the community and the benefits provided by these organisations.

Organisation	2024/25
Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance	£250
Mendip Community Transport	£50
Cheddar Valley Plus (Food Bank)	£100
Somewhere House (Mental Health Charity)	£50
Victim Support	£50
Age UK Somerset	£50
Citizen's Advice Somerset	£50
Children's Air Ambulance	£50

RESOLVED: that the grants as listed above be awarded and paid (the Food Bank grant being allocated to the Local Community Grant cost code) with the remaining grants being Type A.

d. Axbridge Town Trust – grants

A grant request was anticipated from Axbridge Town Trust towards the running of the Town Hall and for the planters.

RESOLVED: that, subject to the request being as budgeted, a grant of £3,640 be paid to Axbridge Town Trust towards the running of the Town Hall, together with a grant of £300 towards the planters.

e. Axbridge and District Museum Trust

A grant request had been received from Axbridge and District Museum Trust. £1,400 had been included in the budget. Members wished to support the Trust which was an asset to the Town.

RESOLVED: that a grant of £1,400 be awarded to the Axbridge and District Museum Trust

f. Website

Steps were being taken to set up a new website. A meeting would be held on 23 October 2024 to be attended by officers and members of the group. The next step would be setting up the sitemap (the list of the website's pages and where they will live in relation to each other). The Clerk was asked to forward the template sitemap to all members, for any input prior to the meeting.

g. Cybersecurity Report

Members had received a copy of the Cybersecurity report.

RESOLVED: that the Cyber Security report be accepted, that the Administration and Finance Advisory Group prioritise the recommended actions, and that quotations be obtained to purchase a replacement computer for the assistant clerk in the next financial year.

h. Community Table

The Men's Shed had used the community space at the October market, with the Town Trust also promoting their 150 club.

i. Monthly Financial Report

Members received a monthly financial report for October 2024 setting out the payments for ratification and authorisation (including recent invoices) together with the receipts, direct debits and standing orders received/paid in September 2024.

RESOLVED:

- 1) that the list of payment of invoices be ratified and approved (Appendix A) subject to the Town Maintenance Contractor invoice being paid, on receipt (as long as it is in accordance with the contract); that the reimbursement to Councillor Ham for the provision of drinks at the carnival being paid on receipt of the supporting information (approximately £100); and the Somerset Council invoice for the SID posts being agreed in principle but to be paid once grant funding was confirmed;
- 2) that the Direct Debit and Standing Order payments for September be ratified and the receipts for September 2024 noted (Appendix B)

99.24 Highways Advisory Group

a. Report of the Group

The Chairman circulated a report of the last meeting and drew attention to numerous highways items. A further letter would be sent to a property at Townsend regarding the overgrown hedge and effect on the speed sign and bus stop sign. The highways working group, of the Local Community Network, would be meeting in November 2024. This would be an opportunity to put forward names of volunteers for the training programme. The key items are set out below.

b. Townsend

There had been a recent accident at Townsend. The potholes still needed to be repaired where the lane joins the A371.

c. Electric Charging Points

Councillor Wells updated members on the information provided by Believe regarding electric charging points. A feasibility study would be the first step should the council wish to pursue this. A non-disclosure agreement would need to be signed at the appropriate time. Members wished to establish whether it would be feasible to install two charging points in Axbridge Town Car Park.

RESOLVED: that a feasibility study be progressed accordingly to establish whether this would be a viable option.

d. Speed Indicator Device

The Speed Indicator Device application had been submitted to Somerset Council. Confirmation was being sought that the scheme was acceptable and efforts were being made to submit the grant application.

e. Highways Matters

Waste behind the former Crown: Some further rubbish had appeared on the land behind the former Crown and officers would contact the properties.

Street Lighting several lights were not working and would be reported. It was suggested that a map of the lights, showing the lamp numbers, should be included on the new website.

Moorland Street Car Park: A reply was awaited from National Grid regarding the wall by the sub-station. An update would be sought and they would be informed of an outside bracket which may need attention.

School Hedge: This was due to be cut during half-term.

Footpath AX1/26: The Mayor would take a look at the overgrown foliage at the top of the path.

Road Closures and Bus diversion: members had considered a letter from a resident expressing concerns regarding diversion of the bus. The Town Maintenance Contractor would be asked to further clear the foliage by the bus stop on the north side of the bypass and to consider putting fluorescent paint/tape on the railings. The Town Council had no jurisdiction regarding the road closures or bus diversions but had made every effort to inform residents. A reply would be sent accordingly.

48 hour sign – these signs had been vandalised again. Replacements would be ordered.

Street sweeper, Houlgate Way – it was noted that the developers had been keeping the street clear of mud.

Loose grate drain, The Square – Somerset Council had marked up the grate for repair.

100.24 Cemeteries, Allotments and Open Spaces

a. Report of the Group

Members received the report of the Group. The next meeting would be held on 21 October 2024. The key items are set out below.

b. Allotment Plots 10A and 10B

Councillor Ham had met with the Quarry who would be happy to have a Volunteer Day at the allotments. She had a form to complete. 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.

c. Allotment Plot Rent

The group recommended that the allotment rent outstanding for plot 9B be written off for personal reasons but that the deposit be held towards maintenance. The tenant had given notice to end the tenancy in April 2025.

RESOLVED: that the outstanding rent be written off accordingly.

d. Notice Board

The group recommended the purchase of a Notice Board at the allotments. Several options had been considered.

RESOLVED: that the weatherproof notice board be purchased from Display Wizard at a cost of approximately £600.

e. Open Spaces Matters

Layby: The Clerk had received correspondence expressing concern at the state of the layby. Members were aware of these concerns but the area was not within the Council's jurisdiction.

101.24 Leisure and Recreation

a. Report of the Group

Members received a report of the Group updating on various matters relating to the changing rooms, public conveniences and car park. The defibrillator had been fitted to the changing rooms. The Chairman would reply to a request for use of the furlong for a school cricket festival. The key items are set out below.

b. Play Area and Public Conveniences Logs

The logs for September 2024 had been completed but not available at the meeting.

c. Additional Handrail – Public Conveniences

A suitable handrail was being sourced.

d. Signage in the Changing Rooms

Members discussed proposed signage on the changing rooms. Costings would be obtained to put a main sign "Axbridge Town Recreation Facility" and then two noticeboards, one for Axbridge Saxons and one for Axbridge United.

e. Internal Decoration of the Changing Rooms

The Facilities Manager has been asked to liaise with the footballers regarding internal decoration of the changing rooms.

f. Town Maintenance Report

The Town Maintenance Contractor had been unable to submit his report for September 2024 in time for the meeting.

102.24 Personnel and Protocol

a. Draft Minutes of the Personnel and Protocol meeting held on 23 August 2024

Members received the draft minutes of the above meeting. Members had met with the Royal British Legion regarding the Remembrance Day Service on 10 November 2024. All members were encouraged to attend. A poppy wreath had been ordered.

b. Civic Service

The Civic Service would be held on Sunday 2 March 2025 and nominations were being sought by 25 November 2024. This would be publicised on social media. Local groups had been contacted and invitations were being sent.

103.24 Strategic Planning Advisory Group

a. Report of the Group

A meeting would be arranged.

b. Axbridge Methodist Church – future

Members had met with the church representatives and members of the Action Group regarding the future of the building. The Council representatives had suggested that the Council facilitate a public meeting to enable people to find out more/express any interest in the use of the building. The building would also be open to the public to view on Sunday 17 November 2024.

RESOLVED: that that Council offer the use of the Town Hall for a public meeting on 18 November 2024 and share the information on social media in due course.

104.24 Draft Budget and Precept 2025/26

Members considered a draft budget showing the estimates for this year and budget figures for next year against each code as shown in the report. If agreed, this would result in a precept requirement of £133,000 – a small 1.53% increase on last year. Members considered this matter, noting that Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payments would also be received from the development at Houlgate Way. Criteria for the spending of these funds would need to be met, so it was agreed that these payments would effectively be ring fenced for future projects and not factored into the general budgeting/precept requirements. However, members did wish to see any impact on employer costs arising from the National Budget before finalising the budget for 2025/26.

RESOLVED: that the budget and precept for 2025/26, as circulated, be approved as an interim budget only, to enable it to be further considered after the National Government's budget (at either the November or December Council meeting) and that it be acknowledged that there will be significant CIL income, ringfenced for future community projects not yet agreed be Council.

105.24 General Correspondence, Consultation and Diary Dates

Members received the correspondence page.

The Mendip Hills National Landscape Management Plan Consultation: would be shared on social media.

Local Community Network (LCN) Access to Services: officers would complete the form mapping the existing community services and groups they were aware of in the first instance and then share with members.

Health and Well being programme – this had been shared with members

Code of Conduct training: was available to members

Tree Consultancy Training: noted.

Somerset Rivers Authority - Annual Report 2023-24: would be placed on the website and sent to members.

The diary dates are as follows:

Date	Meeting	Time	Venue
Monday 14 Oct	Council	7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall
Monday 21 Oct	Leisure and Recreation Cemetery, Allotments and Open Spaces	6.30pm 8.00pm	The Lamb Zoom
Monday 28 Oct	Personnel and Protocol Planning and Licences (if needed) Highways	TBC (likely 6.45) TBC (likely 7.30) TBC (likely 8pm)	Personnel and Protocol Planning and Licences Highways
Monday 4 Nov	Admin and Finance	7.30pm	By Zoom
Monday 11 Nov	Planning and Licences (if needed) Council	6.45pm 7.30pm	Axbridge Town Hall Axbridge Town Hall
TBC	Strategic Planning	7.30pm	15 Hippisley Drive

106.24 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

107.24 CONFIDENTIAL ITEM: Leisure Recreation

a. Confidential Item: Potential Recreation Facilities

Members discussed potential recreation facilities.

Chairman

Date

Appendix A

Agenda Item 8.9 Payments for Ratification (R) and Authorisation - October 2024

Voucher	Date	Supplier	Description	NET	VAT	TOTAL	
190	17.09.2024	Post Office (R)	Postage	2.90	£0.00	£2.90	
191	17.09.2024	Amazon (R)	Office supplies	£19.57	£3.92	£23.49	
199	01.10.2024	A1 Gardening and Tree Surgery Limited	Open Spaces Contract - various	£183.33	£36.67	£220.00	
200	01.10.2024	Greenslades Grounds Maintenance	Grass cutting - Furlong	£144.00	£28.80	£172.80	
201	01.10.2024	Phil Bailey Services Agricultural and Groundworks	Open Spaces Contract - various	£550.00	£110.00	£660.00	
202	01.10.2024	Beki Haines (Arien Signs Ltd)	Various signs	£734.00	£146.80	£880.80	
203	01.10.2024	The Party Shop	Carnival Mayors Lunch	£825.00	£0.00	£825.00	
204	01.10.2024	Axbridge Town Hall	Carnival Mayors Lunch	£55.87	£0.00	£55.87	
205	01.10.2024	Richard Willis	Vinyl Banner 50yrs ATC	£43.85	£0.00	£43.85	
207	10.10.2024	W C Maunders Ltd	Changing Rooms Maintenance	£42.89	£8.58	£51.47	
208	10.10.2024	Somerset Council	Allotment Land Rent	£150.00	£0.00	£150.00	
209	10.10.2024	Somerset Council	SID Posts	£1,000.00	£0.00	£1,000.00	To be paid when grant funding confirmed
210	11.10.2024	PATA UK	Payroll - monthly service	£37.90	£0.00	£37.90	
211-215	25.10.2024	Staff salaries and assoc. payroll organisations	Payroll - October 2024	4341.63		4341.63	
216	14.10.2024	Axbridge Sport and Social Club	Carnival drinks	88.20		88.20	
217	14.10.2024	Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance	Type A Grant	250.00		250.00	
218	14.10.2024	Mendip Community Transport	Type A Grant	50.00		50.00	
219	14.10.2024	Cheddar Valley Plus (Food Bank)	Local Community Grant	100.00		100.00	
220	14.10.2024	Somewhere House (Mental Health Charity)	Type A Grant	50.00		50.00	
221	14.10.2024	Victim Support	Type A Grant	50.00		50.00	
222	14.10.2024	Age UK Somerset	Type A Grant	50.00		50.00	
223	14.10.2024	Citizen's Advice Somerset	Type A Grant	50.00		50.00	
224	14.10.2024	Children's Air Ambulance	Type A Grant	50.00		50.00	
225	14.10.2024	Axbridge and District Museum Trust	Annual Grant	1400.00		1400.00	
226	14.10.2024	CNE	Installation of Defib cabinet	170.00	34.00	204.00	
		Axbridge Town Trust	Town Hall grant	3640.00		3640.00	On receipt of request and in line with budget
		Axbridge Town Trust	Planters grant	300.00		300.00	On receipt of request and in line with budget
		Town Maintenance Contactor	Town Main. Work - Sept 2024				On receipt of invoice and in line with contract
			TOTAL	14379.14	368.77	14747.91	
	Notes	Spending Powers:					
		The Council has the General Power of Competence					
		Bank Reconciliation as at 30 Sept 2024 £137,548.94					

Agenda Item 8.9c Direct Debits & Standing Order Payments - September 2024

Voucher No.	Supplier	Description	Net	VAT	Total
198	Microsoft Office	Microsoft Office - Annual Renewal	£66.66	£13.33	£79.99
197	Zoom	Video Conferencing	£12.99	£0.00	£12.99
196	Vodafone	Telephone - Clerk contract	£14.39	£2.88	£17.27
195	BT	Broadband	£21.72	£4.34	£26.06
194	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Moorland Street Car Park	£120.00	£0.00	£120.00
193	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Town Car Park	£104.00	£0.00	£104.00
192	Npower	Electricity - Moorland St Car Park	£11.34	£0.57	£11.91
189	Somerset Council	Business Rates - Council Office	£56.00	£0.00	£56.00
187	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Changing Rooms	£53.50	£0.00	£53.50
186	Water2Business	Sewerage - Moorland Street Car Park	£10.71	£0.00	£10.71
185	Water2Business	Sewerage - Town Car Park	£10.71	£0.00	£10.71
184	Water2Business	Water and Sewerage - Public Conveniences	£38.50	£0.00	£38.50
183	O2	Telephone - Assistant Clerk	£6.66	£1.33	£7.99
		TOTAL			£549.63

Agenda Item 8.9b Receipts September 2024

Voucher No.	Date	Customer	Description	Total
54	30.09.2024	Adams Memorial	Cemetery fees	£55.00
55	30.09.2024	Wallace Stuart Lady Funeral Services	Cemetery fees	£200.00
56	30.09.2024	Lloyds Bank - savings	Bank Interest	£34.06
53	25.09.2024	National Grid	Lease of Land - Substation, Moorland Street, Axbridge	£200.00
52	12.09.2024	Axbridge C of E First School Academy	Lease of land - Axbridge School	£2,000.00
51	02.09.2024	Axbridge Saxons	Hire of changing rooms	£800.00
			TOTAL	£3,289.06