

AXMINSTER TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BUILDINGS AND FINANCE COMMITTEE HELD AT 6.30 p.m. ON MONDAY, 29th JANUARY 2018 AT AXMINSTER GUILDHALL.

1. PRESENT: Cllr. J.W. Walden, (Town Mayor), Cllr. A.L.Young (Deputy Mayor), Cllr. G.S. Godbeer, Cllr. D.R.H. Hull, Cllr. Mrs. S.L.N. Leat, the Town Clerk and the Deputy Town Clerk. 1 members of the public , 0 member of the press.

CLLR. YOUNG, IN HER CAPACITY AS GUILDHALL MANAGER FOR WHICH SHE DECLARES A PECUNIARY INTEREST, HAS A DISPENSATION TO SPEAK ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE GUILDHALL PROVIDED THE PECUNIARY INTEREST IS NOT OF OVER-RIDING SIGNIFICANCE

CLLR. GODBEER DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST AS BEING A MEMBER OF AXMINSTER GUILDHALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

2. APOLOGIES: Cllr. P.G. Hayward, and Cllr. A.T. Moulding

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING: These were signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman said that the new tenants at the Arts Cafe had taken up occupancy.

The Deputy Town Clerk said that some remedial painting to the Cemetery gates would be carried out by the contractors when the weather permitted.

4. PUBLIC FORUM - PIPPINS:- The following matters were raised by the member of the public:

a) Financial Situation Enquiry – Cllr. Walden said that since the Town Council had assumed responsibility for the building income received had been £21,347 and expenditure had been £47293. The running deficit was £25,856 but that for the current year was £536 The Deputy Town Clerk said that £2400 was due from hirers. Cllr. Hull pointed out that this did not include the cost of staff time. Cllr. Walden said that he did not feel that calculating the breakdown of staff time on a cost centre by cost centre basis was a good use of their time.

b) All Building Strategy – that the Town Council should make any decisions considering the impact on all buildings which are a charge on the rate payer as competing venues can take business from one another. He expressed concerns about the impact in the future of the recent proposals for a major new venue at Cloakham,. He asked whether the Town Council was being put under pressure by Devon County Council to take on the venue and what would happen if the decision was made not to take it on.

Cllr. Walden replied that there was no pressure from Devon County Council and that a series of options for the future would be available. He said that at present, Pippins was more comparable to the Guildhall than the Old Courthouse in the way it operated. Cllr. Young said that some Guildhall bookings had been lost to Pippins. She felt that there should be a consistent pricing policy across all Town Council properties.

c) What Would the Cost of Acquisition be - none, as it would be transferred from Devon County Council at no cost.

5. BACKGROUND REPORT ON PIPPINS: The Consultant Surveyor's Report had been circulated to Councillors. Cllr. Walden went through the report in detail and observed that there were no major structural problems highlighted therein.

Cllr. Walden outlined the various options in relation to the future of the building for the Town Council:

- i. A one year rolling lease.
- ii. A 3 – 5 year lease.
- iii. A longer 99 year-type lease.
- iv. Freehold ownership (subject to compliance with terms set out by Devon County Council) by Axminster Town Council after which it would be up to the Town Council what it did with the building.
- v. Withdrawal from any involvement with the building and returning it to Devon County Council who might then seek other potential owners/tenants, such as a consortium of the present user groups.

Cllr. Godbeer suggested that the Town Council should seek legal advice on the risks and benefits of each option. Cllr. Mrs. Leat queried the reasons behind the County Council's decision to dispose of the building. Cllr. Walden said that it had arisen from the closure of the Youth Service and the Town Council would have to make a value judgement as to whether Pippins is a Community Asset. Cllr. Hull expressed his concern regarding the vehicular exit from the site.

Cllr. Walden said that as it had not proved possible to arrange a meeting with the relevant County Council officers until 14th February the matter would not be placed in the full Town Council agenda until March.

5. UPDATE ON JUBILEE FIELD: - Cllr. Hull urged that in view of the waterlogged condition of the field that the French Drain at bottom of the field should be replaced by an open ditch and that osiers be planted to take up some of the surplus water. Cllr. Walden pointed out that the drain performed the same function as an open ditch.

Cllr. Hull disputed whether the paths and fencing had been agreed by the Town Council. Cllr. Walden said that it had been discussed and agreed by the full Town Council but that any proposals would have to be discussed and agreed with the District Council to ensure that they complied with Section 106 conditions. He said that the developer would have to draw up plans to present to the District Council and that these would then come to the Town Council.

6. PROVISION OF IMPROVED PROJECTION AND MICROPHONE EQUIPMENT FOR MEETINGS:- the additional information for this was not available,

7. MATTERS OF URGENCY: The Deputy Town Clerk said that complications had arisen in furthering the transfer of accounts to a new banking provider as the existing provider had closed down most of the existing accounts without authority and this process would have to be reversed to enable a straightforward transfer of the current accounts.

Cllr. Mrs. Leat explained what the simplest method of switching accounts would be. Once the appropriate accounts with the existing bank were operational again the switching process would be re-started.

NO OTHER BUSINESS WAS BROUGHT FORWARD.

Signed Date