

Report from the Chair of the Strategy and Finance Committee

Since the last Annual Parish Meeting in April 2022 there have been five Strategy and Finance meetings. Key issues covered throughout the year have been Risk Management and Assessment and continuing work at the Guildhall.

In April we vired £8,000 into a “contested election” reserve, as we had not previously considered the possibility of having to fund election costs. We also began work on modernising the legal structure of the Guildhall and agreed to carry out work on this building where safety issues caused risks. In May we looked at the revised Council Asset Register and agreed that the monthly Financial Summary should be published on the Axminster Town Council (ATC) website. We represented the Council in work on the Axe Valley Levelling Up bid, the Axminster Regeneration Board and the EDDC Arts and Culture Forum. In June we agreed to contribute to the cost of bunting at the railway station and thanked Axminster Repair Café for their professional repairs to the mayoral robes. In January we undertook detailed reviews of ATC’s Standing Orders and Financial Regulations and considered the Budget and Precept Statement and Calculation for 2023/24, for presentation to full Town Council. It had become clear by then that the Guildhall required considerable further work and we recommended a meeting be organised between the Town Council and the Guildhall Management Committee. In February we looked at the Risk Management and Assessment Annual Review, a 22-page document covering strategic and specific risks relating to the Council and its assets. The greatest of these is that of mandatory health and safety expenditure will be greater than the Council’s income and reserves. With this in mind, we will be discussing the prioritisation of work on buildings for which the Council is responsible after May’s elections.

Jill Farrow

Chair