

Axminster Town Council

Office Hours
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday
10am – 12 noon

Mayor: Cllr Jill Farrow
Town Clerk: Paul Hayward

www.axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk



THE GUILDHALL
WEST STREET
AXMINSTER
DEVON
EX13 5NX

Tel. 01297 32088

Email: Clerk@axminstertowncouncil.gov.uk

Axminster Town Council:

Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy & Finance Committee

DRAFT MINUTES NOT YET APPROVED; Part ONE version (redacted)

Held in person on Monday 5TH January 2026. Meeting started at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Cllrs. Farrow (JF) (The Chair), Price (JP) (VC), Ashkettle (JA), Dunsbury (RD), Hayward (AH), Leat (SL), Osborn (RO), Walden (JW), Warwick (TW) and Willey (DW).
(Meeting was declared as quorate with ten members present).

Also present:
Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (PH)
No members of the public in attendance.

*The Chair welcomed all in attendance and ran through meeting procedure and protocol.
The Chair highlighted the building fire precautions and alerted those present to the fire exits.*

Public Forum session.

No public representations.
No members of the committee wished to speak in public forum at this point of the meeting.
As such, The Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.02pm

SF26/001

To note members of committee present:

Attendance at meeting shown above.

SF26/002

To note and, if thought fit, to approve apologies for absence and reasons therefore:

Apologies received from:

Cllr. Bridge. Reason for absence noted and accepted.
Cllr. Dowdeswell. Reason for absence noted and accepted.
Cllr. Paice. Reason for absence noted and accepted.

The Chair proposed that these absences and reasons be approved. Seconded DW. Resolved.

Continued overleaf.

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SF26/003

To note members of committee not otherwise present and to receive any other apologies for absence:

Cllr. Hurren. Noted.

SF26/004

To receive any declarations of interest from members of the committee in relation to items of business on this agenda and to note any dispensations previously afforded:

A declaration at this point does not preclude the need for members to declare any additional interests that may arise during this meeting.

No declarations of interest put forward by members.

SF26/005

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Strategy & Finance Committee meeting held 29th September 2025 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes.

Approval of the minutes was proposed by Chair, seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved nem con.

Matters arising:

None raised.

SF26/006

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Strategy & Finance Committee meeting held 1st December 2025 and to consider any matters arising from those minutes.

Approval of the minutes was proposed by Chair, seconded by Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Matters arising:

None raised.

SF26/007

To consider any matters listed on this agenda that Councillors consider should be dealt with as confidential business as per the provisions of The Public Bodies (Admission to meetings) Act 1960: *None raised by committee members other than to note those items already listed on this agenda (SF26/016 to 17(IC) inclusive).*

Continued overleaf.

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Strategy & Finance Business to be considered:

SF26/008

Committee to receive most recent (Q3) Bank Reconciliation, Balance Sheet and Summary (Budget) Monitor report (financial information) as per recommendation of FULL Council.

Members noted November's Financial Report and contents, all of which had been considered and approved by FULL Council on 8th December 2025.

SF26/009

To consider any updates/developments with regards to Local Government Reorganisation and/or MCHLG Devolution programme that may impact upon the Town Councils FY26-27 financial stability, fiscal planning and the subsequent budget and precept considerations.

Verbal report from Clerk/RFO received and noted.

SF26/010

To consider matters pertaining to the Guildhall Venue financial and operational forward plan; Cllr. Price and RFO to present report to members.

Verbal report from Clerk and Cllr. Price received and noted.

Clerk: Please bring this matter back to the committee with the necessary financial reports as soon as possible.

SF26/011

To consider matters pertaining to sponsorship opportunities and agreements relating to Town Council assets and facilities.

Members considered the current DCC consultation over sponsorship proposals on the roundabout by Shand Park, noting ongoing and historic agreement between ATC and DCC over installation and maintenance of planters and smaller sponsorship boards. Clerk was asked to confirm formal end period of existing sponsorship agreement between ATC and local funeral director operator [FY2024/5]. Other discussions have taken place in the past regarding sponsorship of other assets/events [eg. benches, trees, RCA etc]. Members felt it was prudent to deal with the planning application for the roundabout on the 12th January and then consider future sponsorship opportunities and income thereafter. There was general agreement that no additional sponsorship agreements for the roundabout planter panels should be entertained at this time. Noted

Continued overleaf.

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SF26/012

To consider matters pertaining to Town Council's Investment and Borrowing Strategy & Policy; *RFO presented a verbal report on possible revisions to maximise/increase credit interest earnings.*

Unfortunately, due to a technical failure, the Clerk was unable to display or present the necessary scheme details to the committee members present and so the Chair asked that the matter be added to the next FULL Council agenda under "Financial Business" so that members could better understand the proposals and review the details beforehand. Noted.

Clerk: Please action accordingly and circulate both the investment scheme details, and the current adopted Investment and Borrowing Strategy Policy, to all members of Council.

SF26/013

To consider any matters considered as urgent by presiding Chair for discussion or notation only.

(Matters not clearly shown on the agenda may not be decided upon or resolved – LGA 1972 S.100B)

Clerk advised that there was a matter to be discussed (notation only) but that it would be necessary for members to discuss this in Part Two due to the confidential and commercially sensitive nature of the business to be considered and discussed. Noted (see below).

SF26/014

To note the date of the next scheduled meeting of this committee;
23rd February 2026 (this date may be subject to change).

SF26/015

Recommendation: that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Parag. 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act namely, the financial affairs or business affairs or employment affairs of the Town Council by virtue of the fact that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information. The Vice-Chair proposed the motion. The Chair seconded the motion. Resolved.

Part ONE recording was stopped at this point and the meeting moved into Part TWO (Confidential) session whereupon recording was resumed.

Continued overleaf.

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Committee business to be considered in Part Two:

SF26/013 (IC) – deferred from above

To consider any matters considered as urgent by Presiding Chair or Proper Officer for discussion/notation only (Part Two business).

Clerk advised members about two parcels of DCC land which are currently earmarked for disposal/sale. Information provided for update only. Clerk advised that he will make further enquiries as to value/price etc in context of the potential strategic/investment/social value of the two landholdings. Noted.

SF26/016 (IC) To consider update report on matters pertaining to The Old Courthouse.

As this agenda item relates to commercially sensitive business, this item will be considered as a Part Two confidential matter.

RFO provided an update on matters pertaining to The Old Courthouse following the surveyors attendance on site on the 29th December 2025 together with the prospective buyer and their partner. Noted.

SF26/017 (IC) To receive update report on matters pertaining to recent theft at Axminster Municipal Cemetery

As this agenda item relates to commercially sensitive business, this item will be considered as a Part Two confidential matter.

Update report received from Clerk. Noted. No further action for the time being other than to note ongoing procurement as per previously afforded delegated authority and procurement exemptions resolved.

Clerk will bring a further report to FULL Council on 12th January 2026 if financial data available by that point.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 7.40 pm.
Chair thanked all committee members for their time and attendance.

Signed Date: 23rd February 2026

Minutes of the meeting of the Strategy & Finance Committee.

Held in person on Monday 5th January 2026. Meeting started at 7.00 p.m.

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