

Axminster Town Council

Office Hours
Monday to Thursday
9am – 4pm

Mayor: Cllr Jack Price
Town Clerk: Paul Hayward

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Axminster Town Council: Minutes of the meeting of the Full Council.

DRAFT MINUTES NOT YET APPROVED.

Held on Monday 13th July 2026. Meeting started at 7.00 pm.

Present: Cllrs. Price (JP) (Chair), Dowdeswell (MD) (Vice Chair), Ashkettle (JA), Farrow (JF), Hayward (AH), Hurren (WH), Leat (SL), Norman (LN), Osborn (RO), Paice (EP), Walden (JW), Warwick (TW) and Willey (DW).

(Meeting was declared as quorate with thirteen members present).

Also present:

Town Clerk, Paul Hayward (also representing EDDC and DCC)

Deputy Clerk, Sarah Jackson (also representing EDDC)

Five members of the public were 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 representations/questions from the public or from those members present.

The Chair thanked all of the volunteers who had given up their time and effort to water flowers in the Minster Green borders, the Guildhall planters and hanging baskets, and on the West Street roundabout during the recent extreme hot weather.

Subsequently, the Presiding Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.03 pm.

FC26/242

To note members of Council present:

Councillors in attendance at meeting are shown above.

FC26/243

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

Apologies received from:

Cllr. Dunsbury. Work commitment.

The Chair proposed that this absence, and the reason provided, be noted and approved.

Seconded by JF. Resolved unanimously.

Continued overleaf

FC26/244

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

None, other than to note the apology received from EDDC Councillor, Simon Smith.

FC26/245

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 they may become aware of during the course of this meeting.

Cllr. David Willey was afforded a dispensation relating to the hire of the Guildhall venue (Section 33 of The Localism Act 2011) on the 9th February 2026 [Reason: that Councillors considered it appropriate to grant a dispensation for other reasons (E)]; this dispensation will remain in force until the member resigns, or until May 2027, whichever comes first.

AH also declared a "Directly Affects NRI" in respect of agenda item FC26/278. Noted.

FC26/246

To consider and, if thought fit, to approve the minutes of the Annual Meeting of the FULL Council held on Monday 8th June 2026.

The draft minutes were proposed by the Chair, seconded by JA, to be approved.

Resolved unanimously.

FC26/247

To consider any matters arising from those minutes:

One matter was raised, which the Clerk provided some additional information about.

i) Reminder regarding the forthcoming "Good Councillor" training event planned for the 23/7.

FC26/248

To consider and review the draft minutes of the following meetings of committees of the Town Council as listed below (as previously circulated to members and published online):

1) Employment Committee – 1st June 2026 (minutes not available at this time)

2) Operations Committee – 15th June 2026. Noted. One small typographical error amended.

3) Strategy & Finance Committee – 29th June 2026. Noted.

FC26/249

To note the specific recommendations arising from that committee meeting and to consider whether Council wishes to approve their adoption.

a) To note the recommendation of the Operations Committee that the revised Terms of reference for that committee be approved and adopted by the Full Town Council (OC26/046).

Adoption of the Terms of Reference proposed by Chair, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

Continued overleaf

FC26/250

To consider any additional 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. [See FC26/274-279 inclusive].

The Clerk advised that there was a Matter of Urgency (FC26/271) which would need to be considered in closed session due to the confidential nature of the subject. Noted.

FC26/251; For members of Council;

i) To note the date for the forthcoming "Good Councillor" "in person" training session with Devon Association of Local Councils: 23rd July 2026 – start time 18.30 until 21.30.

ii) To note the date for the forthcoming "Code of Conduct" online training session with EDDC Monitoring Officer: 21st July 2026 – start time 18.00 until 20.00.

Both items were noted.

FC26/252

To consider matters pertaining to:

a) Axminster Chamber of Commerce;

Cllr. Hayward presented a report on chamber activity and future events. *Noted.*

b) Plastic Free Axminster; Cllr. Osborn provided an update report. *Noted.*

c) Axminster Climate Action Group:

No report presented. It was noted that the extreme hot weather may have caused some damage to young saplings in the orchard but no further action could be decided upon until an assessment was undertaken by ACAG/orchard volunteers.

d) Light Up Axminster: Cllr Dowdeswell presented a report but asked that this matter also be discussed in confidential session (see below - FC26/276[IC]).

e) Axminster Carnival Committee: Cllr Dowdeswell present an update report.

It was proposed that DW take over the role of Carnival Representative.

Proposed by MD, seconded by the Chair. Resolved.

Clerk: Please amend committee membership matrix accordingly.

FC26/253

To note that a casual vacancy exists following the resignation of former Councillor Paul Bridge for the role of Axminster Town Councillor (Town ward) which the Town Council is permitted to fill by the process known as co-option; to consider nominations received for co-option to the role of Town Councillor.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by JW, that Brian Margetts be co-opted onto the Town Councillor to fill the casual vacancy open for a Town Ward member. Resolved nem con. (TW abstained). Clerk arranged for BM to sign the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

The Chair congratulated BM on his co-option and asked him to take a seat at the member's table.

FC26/254

To note that a meeting of the Axminster Emergency Planning Working Group has been arranged for Tuesday 28th July at 6.30pm.

Noted.

Continued overleaf

FC26/255

To note that the Town Council will be hosting a twin-broadcast of the People's Emergency Briefing film at the Guildhall on Monday 3rd August (early afternoon, and early evening) with a facilitated discussion amongst participants after each showing. Both showings are open to the public and "free-to-attend" but will be ticketed in order to comply with the Guildhall's licensing requirements. A website link can be accessed here: <https://www.nebriefing.org/peb>
Noted by members. The Chair encouraged as many as possible to attend and participate.

FC26/256

To consider a request from the Town Crier seeking financial support from the Town Council to promote and support his honorary civic duties and activities.

After a lengthy discussion, with members expressing a range of differing views, it was proposed by JF, seconded by DW, that the Town Council would pay for the annual membership of the Town Crier's Guild (est. £30) to reflect the service that the Town Crier played in promoting and supporting the town. Additionally, that costs of up to £50 would be reimbursed (twice per annum) on production of a valid receipt for the cleaning of the Town Crier's uniform (in order to maintain them and ensure that the clothing always looked smart and clean).

Resolved by a majority (12 for, 2 against, 1 abstention).

Clerk: Please note and advise the Town Crier accordingly of the decision and arrange for reimbursement to take place subject to conditions above. [Section 144 of the Local Government Act; Power to support tourism in a local area and provide attractions].

FC26/257

To note the date and time of the Axminster Rural Police beat team community event "Emergency Services Day" to be held at The Axe Valley Academy on Tuesday 25th August between 10am and 4.30pm.

Noted. The Chair confirmed that he, and staff team members would be attending to promote the Town Council. It was agreed that Town Council display and event materials and equipment could be used for the event.

FC26/258

To consider further correspondence from Eats Festivals / Gate to Plate organisers in relation to the proposed event on Bank Holiday Monday 31st May 2027; *this matter relates to a previous agenda item; FC26/224 (8th June 2026).*

Members discussed the out-turn from the event and asked that the organisers ensure that mobile WC provision was ensured for 2027, and that the Town Council should continue to support the event as it was a significant draw for visitors and helped with encouraging tourism and boosting high street economy even though the day of the event (BH Monday) meant that a great number of traders were not open to receive a direct benefit from footfall, but also noting that those which were open did see positive improvement to customer numbers and spend.

FC26/259

To consider any updates pertaining to Local Government reorganisation and devolution; in particular, the issues relating to Devon County (and the relationship between the County Council, the Unitary Councils, the District Councils and the smaller local authorities – town and parish councils); *Clerk to provide any updates received from higher-tier authorities.*

Clerk and Chair presented a short update report to members. Noted. It was hoped that a decision on the future of LGR in Devon would be made by 10th August.

FC26/260

To consider any updates/proposals pertaining to potential future asset and/or service provision transfers that could affect the Town Council's financial or operational functions as a result of the ongoing LGR process, and to discuss Council's aims, objectives and aspirations in that regard; Clerk to provide outline report to members.

Clerk provided an update report. In the absence of a definitive decision, no further decisions or consideration of this subject could realistically be undertaken. Further updates will follow after 10th August.

FC26/261

To note, and consider, EDDC Licensing Applications as below:

a) For Jane Rockett (Taste of Axminster) Minster Green, Axminster, EX13 5AH; for Friday 31st July, Friday 28th August and Friday 25th September 2026 between 15.30 hrs and 21.30 hrs each date for a maximum of 12 traders at a community food event.

b) For Mr Rance (Tasty Truck) Axminster Carpets Ind. Est. car park, Musbury Road, Axminster, EX13 5JR; for an annual licence for food vending Monday to Saturday 07.30hrs to 17.30 hrs and Sunday 08.00 hrs to 17.30 hrs.

and, to consider whether to submit any formal comments in respect of those applications. All applications were noted. Members agreed to not submit any formal objections to these applications. A third application had been received on the day of the meeting relating to AxClub (a Padel Tennis centre) on Musbury Road [former Carpets site]. No comments made in regard of that application.

FC26/262

To note any recent correspondence from DALC and NALC.

None received. A statement is anticipated as soon as a decision on LGR is made.

FC26/263

To receive an update report on progress relating to the request from the local community that:

"Axminster Town Council confirm their support for the installation of an ATM at the premises of the Banking Hub in Trinity Square for the benefit of Axminster's retailers, the town's tourism economy and hospitality sector, and for the wider public amenity"

The Chair and the Clerk updated members on recent meetings with Cash Access group representatives and the proprietor of the Axminster Banking Hub. Progress was continuing to try and seek agreement for an additional ATM in the town centre.

FC26/264

To consider a further matter pertaining to the recording of Council meetings (as a policy decision) and the provision of said recordings in respect of GDPR / Data Protection compliance and Freedom of Information / Transparency / Publication Scheme requests;
i) That the Town Council considers whether to supply – without charge – physical memory sticks / USB devices to members of the public for the purposes of providing digital media and audio recordings upon request.

Continued overleaf

FC26/264 (continued)

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by JA, that the Town Council do NOT provide hard copy IT media equipment for such purposes but, instead, always seek to provide such IT material and data by way of electronic transfers (such as via WeTransfer service). Reason: Cost implications.

It was also noted that members of the public requiring such information occasionally provided their own IT equipment but that new guidelines on cyber-protection recommended that 3rd party equipment should not be connected to the TC database and network due to the risks of cyber-infection and data control breaches.

FC26/265

To receive an update report from the RFO on progress relating to the proposal to take advantage of surplus solar PV generation at The Guildhall by way of SEG transmission to a nominated energy provider to generate additional Town Council income receipts; RFO to provide update report to members. *Noted.*

FC26/266

To receive a report from the Clerk on potential variations to the customary 4-year cycle of Town and Parish Council elections (scheduled for May 2027 presently) and the consequences for smaller authorities seeking to take advantage of General Power of Competence legislation. *The Clerk to provide update report to members based on information received via LGR discussions. Noted.*

FC26/267

Planning matters:

a) To consider any planning applications received prior to the agenda publication and currently awaiting consideration (and decision):

Hyperlinks to EDDC website can be found using the blue highlighted applications references.

1) **26/1109/V106** 85 Cherry Tree Road, Axminster, EX13 5GG
Variation of S.106 agreement dated 14/2/2003 seeking to expand definition of "local need" to include East Devon, South Somerset, and West Dorset.

SL proposed that the Town Council should support the application. Seconded by the Chair. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please notify EDDC planning team accordingly.

b) To ratify planning decisions made by way of delegated authority afforded to Chair of Planning Committee, Cllr. Leat, and the Council's Proper Officer in consultation with the members of the Council's Committee.

None to be considered at time of agenda publication.

Continued overleaf

FC26/267

Planning matters (continued):

c) To consider planning applications received after the agenda publication and currently awaiting consideration (and decision) – published on a supplementary agenda (if applicable):

1) **26/1316/FUL** 10a Weycroft Avenue Millwey Rise Ind. Estate, Axminster, EX13 5HU
Change of use from industrial / warehouse TO indoor leisure facility for padel tennis.

SL proposed that the Town Council should support the application. Seconded by JW.

Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: please notify EDDC planning team accordingly.

d) To consider any Planning Correspondence received.

To note statutory advice on the subject of “material planning considerations” for member’s reference when considering and making recommendations on EDDC planning applications.

e) To note any matters relating to planning that have arisen as a result of EDDC Planning Committee or Strategic Planning Committee meetings since the last FULL meeting of Council or at future meetings of these two EDDC planning committees.

None to be considered at time of agenda publication.

f) To consider any other planning matters not already included above, including representations from members on such matters (eg. planning decisions, enforcement, planning legislation, Tree Protection Orders etc)

None to be considered at time of agenda publication.

g) To consider report from the Clerk on future Section 106 and CIL agreements in the Axminster / East Devon area, and to consider the impact on CIL funding of the parish moving towards the point where a “made” Neighbourhood Plan exists (subject to conformance to the EDDC emerging Local Plan 2020 – 2042). To note report from the Clerk and to consider / decide upon any actions necessary / appropriate.

Report noted. It was agreed that this should be a subject for a future Strategy & Finance meeting, or a relevant FULL Council session, subject to volume / urgency of agenda business. Noted.

FC26/268

To consider Council’s financial matters:

a) To consider and, if thought fit, to approve and ratify payments schedule for June 2026.

Payments for June 2026 (£49,110 net) proposed for approval by the Chair, seconded by the Vice-Chair. Resolved unanimously.

b) To receive, and note, the Responsible Financial Officer’s report and financial pack for June 2026 and to approve the Bank Reconciliation for the 30th June 2026.

Bank reconciliation for June 2026 was proposed for approval by the Chair, seconded by JA. Resolved unanimously. RFO report was duly noted.

Clerk: please arrange for these documents to be signed by a non-bank signatory.

Continued overleaf

FC26/268

To consider Council's financial matters (continued):

c) Questions to the RFO on these accounts / financial reports from members.

No questions / queries / concerns raised.

d) To note the draft report relating to publication of transactions (payments) over £250 net as per the requirements of the Transparency Code regulations and, if found fit, to approve.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by JW, that the report be accepted and the data published accordingly. Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please note and action accordingly.

e) To note that the statutory period for the exercise of Public Rights ends on 14th July 2026 at 5pm. Noted.

f) To note Council's Reserve Balances and to consider any virements between reserve funds considered necessary or appropriate by members.

Noted. No transfers / virements proposed for action.

g) To consider the extension of the annual service contract with Devon Investigations for the sum of £990 (net) for Bronze Cover at Jubilee Field and Lower Cemetery Field (Community Orchard) Renewal of service contract and payment of annual fee (£990) proposed by the Chair, seconded by MD. Resolved unanimously.

RFO: Please note. Advise contractor accordingly and arrange for their invoice to be processed as per agreed credit terms.

Other Council business to be considered:

FC26/269

To note request from "For the Love of a Railway" for use of selected Town Council assets (such as ropes, staves, cones, barriers, maintenance consumables etc) to assist towards the operation and logistical planning of the proposed community event in September 2026 and to consider whether the Town Council wishes to provide such support.

It was proposed by JW, seconded by JF, that the request be accommodated within the limits of what the Town Council can realistically and logistically provide; delegated authority to be afforded to the Clerk to assist FTLOAR group as far as was practicable. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk/Deputy Clerk: Please note and action accordingly.

FC26/270

To note correspondence from Axminster Parochial Church Council (PCC) relating to earlier correspondence sent by the Town Council in relation to the funding arrangements for the Church Clock (see minutes FC26/136 – 13th April 2026) and to resolve upon any actions deemed necessary or appropriate in light of that correspondence received.

i) Furthermore, to consider and agree the future level of funding from the Town Council to the PCC under the 1967 Church Clock Funding Agreement.

Continued overleaf

FC26/270

Funding arrangements for the Church Clock (continued):

The correspondence from the PCC, and the corroborating report from the RFO, was considered and debated at length. JA proposed that the £500 church clock “grant” be paid for this financial year but that the Clerk be subsequently directed to write to the PCC Treasurer seeking a meeting to discuss a modernisation and revision of the 1967 funding agreement which members felt was overly ambiguous, and did not reflect the modern needs of the Town Council for transparency and “best value” spending. Resolved - 11 votes for, 1 against with 1 abstention.

Clerk/RFO: Please note and action accordingly. Please bring this matter back to the Town Council when further meetings have taken place and a draft wording for a revised funding agreement created between the two relevant parties ie Axminster Town Council and the PCC.

FC26/271

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

- i) Clerk updated members on the consequences of the recent unlawful occupation of the EDDC recreation field adjacent to the community orchard, and the costs incurred by government bodies in securing the eviction of the trespassers (within 48 hours). The Chair expressed his thanks to the ATC Admin Team and Grounds Maintenance operatives for their swift actions and help in securing, and also clearing, the site. The Chair also thanked EDDC and Devon Investigations for their proactive involvement. RFO estimated total costs incurred (by EDDC) at £1500-£2000.
- ii) A second matter of urgency was raised but Clerk recommended that this be dealt with in closed session due to the confidential nature of the business. Noted.

FC26/272

- i) To confirm the date of the next scheduled Ordinary FULL meeting of the Town Council - 14th September 2026.
- ii) To also confirm the date of an extraordinary meeting of the FULL Town Council on Monday 10th August 2026 to consider matters pertaining to Local Government Reorganisation in Devon.

FC26/273

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 Paragraph 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. Proposed by the Vice-Chair. Seconded by the Chair. Resolved unanimously.

The meeting moved into Part Two session. All members of the public left the room.

The agenda items below are considered confidential due to the commercially sensitive subjects/topics to be discussed and the involvement of 3rd parties which would necessitate disclosure of confidential information during the discussions.

Continued overleaf

PART TWO COUNCIL BUSINESS TO BE CONDUCTED:

FC26/271

To consider any matters considered as urgent by the presiding Chair for notation only. (deferred from public session for reasons of confidentiality).

ii) Clerk and Chair updated members on a matter relating to technical services provision at the Guildhall in relation to a 3rd party contractor. Members noted the update and subsequently approved the use of alternative contractors in order to ensure continuity of performances and to enable technical support services to be maintained as per performer expectations. Noted.

FC26/274 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to The Old Courthouse and to note any correspondence received, and to receive update from Clerk on any confidential or commercially sensitive issues arising since last FULL Council meeting.

This matter is considered commercially sensitive and confidential due to the subject to be discussed and the involvement of 3rd party tenants.

The Clerk provided a verbal update on progress with the sale / disposal of the property and the current position with regards to legal work and negotiations with the 3rd party buyer and their solicitors. Noted. Clerk was asked to continue to expedite the completion of the sale as swiftly as possible.

FC26/275 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to the Jubilee Field recreation area and adjoining curtilage.

This matter is considered commercially sensitive and confidential due to the subject to be discussed and the involvement of a 3rd party landowner.

i) Clerk brought members up-to-date in relation to recent correspondence received from the 3rd party householder. Members discussed the correspondence and agreed to take no further action at this time, especially in view of previous resolutions regarding vexatious correspondence.

The Vice-Chair proposed to suspend Standing Orders at 9.00pm to permit the meeting to progress beyond the 2-hour limit. Seconded by the Chair. Resolved unanimously.

ii) RFO presented a series of tender submissions to members in relation to the proposed Jubilee Field pathway extension project works. The Chair thanked the Deputy Clerk for her hard work in collating all the tender quotes together and for her analysis of the various aspects of each quote. After deliberation, **it was proposed by JW, seconded by the Chair, that Contractor T be awarded the works contract for the tendered price of £18,442 net, this sum to be funded from the existing Jubilee Field "dowry" reserve. Resolved unanimously.**

Clerk/Deputy Clerk: Please advise the successful contractor and make arrangements for a plan of works and a timetable for commencement/completion. Please also contact all other unsuccessful parties and advise them accordingly.

Continued overleaf

FC26/276 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to Christmas Lighting.

This matter is considered commercially sensitive and confidential due to the subject to be discussed.

The Clerk advised members of the contents of correspondence from the Light Up Axminster administrator / organisers which outlined their intention to relinquish the responsibility for the Christmas Lighting in the town (and associated events) over to the Town Council. Members noted that the budget for Christmas Lighting in this year's financial statement was only £2000. Members also reflected on the lack of resource within the Council at the present time. Councillors duly recognised the civic importance of an illuminated town centre and that other town councils had taken on the responsibility (and budget liability) over recent years. The underlying feeling was that it was too late in the year for 2026 but that the Council could consider stepping in for 2027 (having had the benefit of 12 months to plan ahead). The "Light Up Axminster" group needed to make a public statement setting out their intentions to step down and the Town Council should consider funding in 2027/28 when it met to consider that budget later in the year. No resolutions were proposed, nor any commitment to take over the Christmas Lighting duties at this time but Clerk was directed to maintain liaison with the LUA team to better understand when and how they wished to pass on the message to the community that they could no longer carry on.

FC26/277 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to Woodbury Park allotments and an adjoining landowner.

This matter is considered commercially sensitive and confidential due to the subject to be discussed and the involvement of a 3rd party landowner.

Clerk (and Deputy Clerk) advised members of a minor boundary dispute that required members decision. After a review of the correspondence from the 3rd party, members directed the Clerk to continue discussions with the 3rd party with a view to finding a mutually acceptable solution without recourse to legal activity and to work with the GMO team in relation to provision of fencing and hedging to secure the boundary from encroachment but to provide the level of amenity (and the view) that the 3rd party sought. Noted.

FC26/278 (IC)

To consider quotations for the provision of electrical services at The Guildhall (primarily, external and emergency lighting).

This matter is considered commercially sensitive and confidential due to the subject to be discussed.

AH left the room at this point having declared a "directly affects NRI" earlier in the meeting.

It was subsequently proposed to suspend Council's Financial Regulations due to the urgency of the proposed works and the availability of contractor [C] and to award the works contract to them. Proposed by JF, seconded by WH. Resolved unanimously.

Clerk: Please notify the contractor accordingly and make arrangements for the completion of the proposed works as a matter of urgency on the grounds of guest/staff safety and building security.

AH was invited to rejoin the meeting at this point.

Continued overleaf

FC26/279 (IC)

To consider matters pertaining to Section 106 funded recreation amenities and potential projects for the use of said funding, as per EDDC “Participatory Budgeting” criteria.

This matter is considered commercially sensitive and confidential due to the subject to be discussed and the involvement of a 3rd party landowner.

The Clerk provided an update for members in relation to ongoing negotiations over potential S106 funded recreational facilities (upgrades). Noted. Clerk was directed to continue discussions and to liaise with EDDC Section 106 officers to establish what the best course of action would be to bring this potential project to fruition and the timings for both consultation and project delivery. Members also noted that the project depended on the consent and approval of the 3rd party landowner.

Clerk: Please note and continue to discuss with all parties concerned and bring this matter back to Council when further developments warrant, subject to resourcing capacity within the ATC team.

With no further business to attend to, the Chair closed the meeting at 10.20 pm.

The Chair thanked all council members for their time and patience for such a long meeting.

Signed

Date: 2nd November 2026

Minutes of the meeting of the Full Council.

Held on Monday 13th July 2026. Meeting started at 7.00 pm.

DRAFT MINUTES NOT YET APPROVED