

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 Extraordinary meeting of the Employment Committee

MINUTES APPROVED; Employment Committee meeting 1st June 2026

Held in person on Monday 20th April 2026 at 7.00pm.

Members present:

Cllrs. Price (Chair) (JP), Dowdeswell (MD), Farrow (JF), Leat (SL), Paice (EP), Walden (JW) and Willey (DW).

(Meeting was quorate with seven committee members present).

Also present:

Clerk to the Council, Paul Hayward.

No members of the public in attendance.

Chair welcomed all present. Chair highlighted the building fire precautions and alerted those present to the fire exits.

Public Forum session.

No public speakers present.

Chair closed the Public Forum session at 7.01pm

Part ONE business.

EC26/028

To note members of the Employment Committee present at the meeting:

As above.

EC26/029

To receive and, if thought fit, to note the absence and to approve the reasons given for the absence: (LGA 1972 s.85(1))

Cllr. Hayward had sent her apologies and reasons for absence. Noted.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by JF, that the apologies (and reasons therefore) be approved. Resolved unanimously.

EC26/030

To note members of the committee who are neither present nor have given their apologies for absence:

Cllr. Hurren was absent. Noted.

Continued overleaf.

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EC26/031

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.

This does not preclude the need for members to declare any additional interests that may arise during the meeting. No declarations of interest offered by members in relation to the business on the agenda for consideration.

EC26/032

To consider and, if thought fit, approve the minutes of the Employment Committee extraordinary meeting held 26th March 2026.

And to consider matters arising from those minutes not otherwise listed on this agenda.

It was proposed by the Chair, seconded by JF that the minutes of that meeting be approved. Resolved unanimously. There were no matters arising from these minutes.

EC26/033

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 (see below).

No other matters to be considered in Part Two session other than that already listed on the agenda under agenda business items EC26/037 to 040 inclusive.

EC26/034

To consider any matters considered as urgent by the presiding Chair for discussion. No matters raised by Chair for discussion or reference.

EC26/035

To note the date of the next scheduled meeting of the committee.

The next scheduled meeting date of the committee was noted as 20th July 2026 unless any extraordinary meetings were required before that time.

EC26/036

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 JF, seconded by JW. Resolved unanimously.

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The Part One meeting closed and the Part One recording was stopped and a separate recording commenced for Part Two.

Part TWO business.

Business to be considered in Part Two session; matters which are considered as confidential as they relate to Council employment.

EC26/037(IC)

To consider any matters pertaining to Council employees, remuneration and Terms & Conditions of Employment which require the attention and decision of the employment committee; Clerk presented reports to committee members on the following matters:

i) Employee remuneration incl. allowances and stipends.

Clerk reported that the National Employers Group and the Trade Unions had not reached agreement on the FY26-27 pay award and that the unions were consulting their members accordingly. The Employers offer of 3.3% was within the budgetary variance already integrated into the ATC FY26-27 budget for staffing costs. Noted

ii) Pension matters.

This item was deferred to the next meeting of the Employment Committee as there was no business to be considered.

iii) Terms and Conditions of Employment.

Clerk advised that an employee had made an approach to use the Council's Flexible Working Policy to seek a return to their original contracted weekly hours, having previously reduced the weekly hours as per Flexible Working Policy. **JW proposed that the request should be agreed if formally made. Seconded by JF. Resolved unanimously.**

Clerk: Please note and action accordingly if formal request made via employee.

iv) Training / Continuing Professional Development

The Clerk provided a draft wording for a Training and Development Policy and Training Register, for both the necessary compliance for the NALC Quality Award process, and to comply with sector good practice doctrines. JF agreed that training should be made available to officers, employees and councillors alike if requested and required and noted that the Town Council's budget had been approved to reflect the likely costs of such training resources.

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Clerk was asked to provide a schedule of courses available for Councillors and to make arrangements for a group training session to allow all to participate in the "Introduction to Councillor" course as a starting point, and to ask DALC/NALC to suggest a "top 10" list of courses for future reference. CyberSecurity Training / GDPR and Social Media usage were other courses discussed by members as important in the modern age.

Clerk was asked to revise the draft wording of the Training Development Policy and Training Register (template) back to the next scheduled meeting of the Employment Committee for further review and discussion. Noted.

v) Appraisals / Performance Management (PM)

Clerk provided on proposed appraisal timetable, the next tranche to be completed in May/June 2026. SL suggested that a better timing would be to complete by January / February annually to coincide with the budgeting cycle and to allow payment of the increment (if payable and authorised by virtue of the performance review outcome) in April's staff payments to align the budget with the current financial year. Noted. Clerk to re-schedule appraisal cycle accordingly.

Clerk outlined two ongoing HR matters. These are redacted herewith for reasons of employee confidentiality. Members discussed those matters at length. SL felt that one annual appraisal was insufficient given the fast-moving and ever-changing nature of the Council's activities. SL also put forward the suggestion that EmployComm needed to be more proactive in staff management and performance reviews. JW countered by stating that the committee (ie. Councillors) needed to be removed from the process as that was the duty and responsibility of the Clerk (Proper Officer) in their role as Head of Paid Service for the Town Council and that Councillor's involvement (or appraisals by committee) could be counter-productive and perceived as "micro-management". It was also noted that the taxpayers of Axminster did not perceive spend on HR functions and processes as critical use of limited Council resources but accepted that it is was key area for attention and one of the core practicalities of running any organisation, local government sector or otherwise.

Clerk to undertake performance reviews as per FY26-27 timetable and bring back to EmployComm once completed. Noted.

vi) Work experience / Apprenticeships.

This item was deferred to the next meeting of the Employment Committee as there was no business to be considered.

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vii) Recruitment and resourcing.

Members discussed this topic at length, and made recommendations, and gave directions to the Clerk (in consultation with the Chair) and asked that the matter be brought back to the next meeting of EmployComm with a suitable report. Noted.

The topic and detail of this discussion has been redacted as it relates to the confidential business of employees and should therefore not be published. Noted for Part One version.

viii) Implications of Employment Rights Bill (effective from 1st April 2026)

The Clerk was directed to send updates from peninsula (and other sources such as DALC, NALC, SLCC etc) to all EmployComm members as and when received. Additionally, it was noted that local training events were taking place and members were encouraged to attend as and when available as a training resource.

ix) Any other employment matters requiring members consideration.

Clerk updated members * as to the ongoing revision and editing of the Council's employment policies, as a result of the review by the HR consultancy at Council's request to ensure current legislative compliance and good practice within the sector. It was felt that a meeting of the EmployComm just to consider policies would be unhelpful and too tiring for members and so Clerk was asked to bring back a selection of policies to each future meeting for review and re-adoption / approval. Noted. * It was also recognised that the Clerk and other administrative officers were undertaking CiLCA training presently in which policy creation and compilation was a key factor for their training portfolios. Some policies are also mandatory for the NALC Quality Award submission.

EC26/038 (IC)

To receive a report from Clerk relating to Guildhall employee matters and to resolve any actions thereafter;

This item was deferred to the next meeting of the Employment Committee as there was no business to be considered other than that which had already been discussed earlier within Part Two.

EC26/039 (IC)

To consider a matter pertaining to employee occupational health.

Clerk presented a report to committee members regarding two occupational health matters. Noted. The details of those discussions have been redacted as they relate to the confidential employment matters of employees and are therefore considered not appropriate for general Part One publication.

Continued overleaf.

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JW proposed that standing orders be suspended to allow the committee meeting to progress beyond the 120-minute point. Seconded by The Chair. Resolved unanimously.

EC26/040 (IC)

To receive a summary update report on employee leave allocations and periods of leave remaining, including TOIL accrued, including a year-to-date sickness/absence report:

- a) Clerk / Proper Officer
- b) All other ATC employees

Reports were noted and revision to leave calculation (by hours, not days) via the BrightHR HR system was also noted for operational reasons. Members noted the administrative workload of the proposed 2026-27 Council meeting timetable and asked Clerk to integrate that workload into the assessment / options report referred to in EC26/037 viii) above.

With no further items to discuss, the Chair closed the meeting at 9.05pm.

Signed Date: 1st June 2026

MINUTES APPROVED; Employment Committee meeting 1st June 2026

Held in person on Monday 20th April 2026 at 7.00pm..